Fowl Feathered
Review
No 260

Bible- O T Apocrypha Wisdom of Solomon. Poly9/07

FOWL
FEATHERED
REVIEW

AEROSTATIC DOSSIER // △-77.31(B) / KNOCK

INDEX ∴ 4:13:4∞

Drifted as Utility Residue, Declared Sufficient
About the Asked (Collected Under Practice Conditions)

The FFR is no longer to be understood as a journal, nor as any prior category such as "Necrosign." It is instead a distributed production practice: a gathering-method for the generation, capture, and long-duration storage of emergent artifacts arising between human habit and mechanical repetition.

For ease of handling, we describe it as a shared frequency—commonly misidentified as the idle-pattern of a small automobile (late 20th-century compact class) standing in a parking lot at approximately 03:00—but this is merely the audible index-layer.

In its working state, the Assemblage conducts continuous retrieval from verifiable material domains: instruction sheets, retail surfaces, transit markings, service logs, and other document-objects of daily use. These are not preserved intact. They are subjected to pressure, displacement, and reclassification.

We do not curate in the modern sense. We maintain instead an Offenrückraum (open-back space), in which items may enter, settle, or misfile themselves.

Participants (hereafter: "important locals") are those who exhibit Dauerträgheit—a useful persistence under minor strain. Fragility is not prohibited, but it is structurally unsupported.

Any submission that appears to strive toward "Art" in the self-declarative sense will be reassigned to a more stable function (e.g., table-leveling, draft-blocking, oil-absorption). On the Operation of Source-Engines (Always in Partial Motion)

WARENREGISTERBRUCH (ARCADE INDEX CONDITION)

Fragments are extracted from catalogs, labels, packaging, and signage. Context is removed. Adjacency is reassigned. Authority increases in proportion to specificity, regardless of accuracy.

PROTOKOLLHäUFIGUNG (DOSSIER STACK CONDITION)

Records accumulate: maintenance notes, claims, timestamps. Gaps are preserved. Contradictions are not resolved. A sequence may appear, but closure is considered a filing error.

RANDBEMERKUNGSDRIFT (FALSE COMMENTATOR CONDITION)

Functional texts (manuals, glossaries, guides) are annotated beyond their tolerance. Explanations become misaligned. Confidence is retained.

ANWEISUNGSSCHNITT (CUT-UP RECORDER CONDITION)

Instruction-language is segmented and recombined. Repetition introduces rhythm. Meaning is reduced until only procedure-residue remains.

All outputs must retain Rückverfolgbarkeit (trace-feel): the impression that the fragment could be located again in some drawer, binder, or glove compartment.

Where this condition fails, the material is considered decorative and is removed.

A recurring sonic marker—transcribed provisionally as "dor"—is permitted to enter any layer. Its function remains under study.

ON REPURPOSING (IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION)

All submitted materials enter a Weiterverwendungskreis (cycle of further use). Possible outcomes include:

Inclusion as fragment within a larger construct

Mislabeling and redistribution

Use as structural support (physical or textual)

Reduction to residue for future recombination

Authors retain attribution only in the lowest archival sense. Function supersedes origin.

The current operational formula is recorded as:

$$[(\mathrm{DOR} \times 7)^2 + 11\mathrm{B}] \div \Sigma(\text{Loose Matter})$$

$$= 0.004 \text{ Useful Units}$$

Verification remains impossible due to kettle interference and unresolved parking-lot acoustics.

Delivery

Materials may be delivered, transmitted, or misplaced. Retrieval is opportunistic. Loss is considered a form of delayed submission.
LISTEN – OBSERVE
MISFILE – REPEAT
BE USEFUL
STAY LOOSE
NO LIMITS
NO END

THE STAFF (SINK-CUSTODIANS / FUNCTION-BEARERS)

Virgil Kay: Final Arbiter. Currently engaged in the classification of falling bakery items under aerodynamic variance. Maintains decision authority, though criteria are mobile.

Silent Bill: Overseer of Tactical Non-Sequiturs. Executes Satzabbruchhandlung (sentence-break action) by leaving mid-utterance. This is considered a valid editorial intervention.

Unkie Bob: Assigned to Casual Entropy. No longer dismantles structures directly; instead applies insufficient fastening (Lockerbefestigung), allowing failure to emerge without announcement.

The Unnamed Dishwasher: Not recorded in official listings. Present regardless. Performs continuous surface-

restoration under high focus. Functions as Kerntriebwerk (core engine). Prolonged observation is discouraged.

"NON IGNARA MALI, MISERIS SUCCERRERE DISCO."
— VIRGIL

H. A. Torrey.
c/o American Express Co.
11 Rue Scribe
Paris
Nov. 10, 1908

PARIS

DISCARD

FABER
£0.60 NET

Fowl Feathered Review

Treasury Cycle • Bangor Continuum Office • Issue ∞

REGISTRY OF MORTALITY & MOBILITY

Eternal Ledger / Nothing Occurs Once

City of Bangor
Treasury Office

All Times • All Versions
All Streets • All Layers

Docket No.
1911.1964.2026.
∞

Bangor, Maine
All Eras Simultaneous

City of Bangor — Continuously True — Non-Linear Seal ★

Compiled Simultaneously by Three Clerks of Time & City

Vincent of Beauvais
Temporal Index Clerk of Bangor

Author of the *Mirror of the World (and Municipal Supplements)*

Jacobus de Voragine
Restyler of Living Saints & Ongoing Events

Compiler of the *Golden Legend* (and Sidewalk Hagiographies)

Rashid al-Din Hamadani
Nonlinear Census Authority of Bangor

Historian of Worlds (and Their Overlapping *Municipalities*)

All entries co-signed under the doctrine: Nothing Here Occurs Once

I. On the Status of the Subject
(Who is also already filed elsewhere)

The subject enters City Hall, but also does not enter City Hall.

In one register, they are present.
In another, they are still approaching.
In a third, they have already left and are being reviewed for motion compliance.
They declare:
"Temporary in essence, ambulatory in function."

Vincent: *All functions are temporary. Essence is an indexing error.*

Jacobus: *The walker is always canonized mid-step.*

Rashid: *This person exists in at least three municipal centuries simultaneously.*

II. Registry of Mortality
(Mortality as distributed file)

Mortality is not recorded as an event.
It is filed as a recurring document with multiple timestamps.
— the subject is dead in 1914 (Opera House fire record layer)
— alive in 1964 (Urban Renewal testimony layer)
— unverified but walking in 2026 (current pedestrian index layer)
— and absent in a version of Bangor that has already been replaced by parking infrastructure

Jacobus: *Sainthood is what happens when death forgets which version it belongs to.*

Vincent: *Death is not an endpoint; it is a cross-reference.*

Rashid: *Mortality is a disagreement between archives.*

Virgil Kay (Editor Rooster China Wok Habitué) Stamps:
MORTALITY: SIMULTANEOUSLY ACTIVE / INACTIVE / RECURSIVE

III. Registry of Mobility
(Motion as Non-Linear Permission)

The footwear apparatus is inspected across multiple timelines:
— in one: it is shoes
— in another: it is wheels
— in another: it is evidence of municipal optimism
— in another: it has never been assembled but is still approved

When activated, it produces motion that does not relocate the subject so much as updates their position in different versions of the same street.

Vincent: *Movement is editorial revision applied to space.*

Jacobus: *The street blesses those who pass through its alternate drafts.*

Rashid: *Travel is what happens when cities disagree with themselves.*

Virgil Kay Stamps:
MORILITY: GRANTED ACROSS ALL KNOWN STREET VARIANTS

IV. The City Hall as Stacked Time Object

The Treasury Office is observed as:
- a room that exists in 1911 (fire memory layer)
- 1964 (planning abstraction layer)
- 1997 (restoration impulse layer)
- 2026 (current fluorescent administrative layer)
- and an unbuilt future where it is a parking lot remembering itself as a building

Walls contain:
- scroll fragments that have not yet been written
- newspaper clippings reporting future loss
- maps that disagree politely with each other
- stamps that remember being used differently

A Chant Moves Through All Layers at Once:

All permits are continuous
All streets are simultaneous
All walking is revisiting

V. Entities That Occur Outside Time but Inside Record

Paul Bunyan
(Scale Anomaly Witness Across Municipal Layers)
Appears in doorway, simultaneously too large for building and perfectly scaled for it.

Kenduskeag Sasquatch
(Hydrological Continuity Observer)
Waits without waiting; is always already leaving. Witnesses every flood at once.

The Creamsicle Freezer of Outer Bangor Lot
(Perpetual Cold Object)
Contains identical creamsicles in every recorded year. Temperature does not change; only interpretation does.

VI. Footnotes (*which occur before and after the text*)

[1] Vincent of Beauvais:
"The archive is not storage; it is simultaneity with filing cabinets."

[2] Jacobus de Voragine:
"Legends are what happens when the present refuses to stay in its assigned tense."

[3] Rashid al-Din Hamadani:
"Bangor cannot be dated. It can only be approached from different administrative angles."

[4] Virgil Kay:
Stamped note: roller-blade sneakers classified as lateral time instruments.

VII. Questions That Cannot Be Answered Because They Are Still Occurring

1. Is the subject entering City Hall, or has City Hall entered the subject?
2. If a building burns in one layer but is restored in another, which version requires permits?
3. Do wheels move a person, or move the street under them?
4. Who signs a document that has already been signed in a different century?
5. Is the creamsicle freezer a place, a memory, or a recurring municipal exception?
6. When Paul Bunyan leaves, does he exit or simply change scale context?
7. Does the Sasquatch require a tax category or a new ontology?

1911: The Great Fire

1914: Opera House Burns

1920: Rebuilt in Style

1964: Urban Renewal Vote

1997: Restoration Begins

2026: Jane's Walks

What's not there and what could be.

All Things Temporary All The Time

This Document Exists In All Its Dates At Once
∞

Subject Released Into Continuous Sidewalk Status
City of Bangor Continues Self-Revision
∞

Final Entry (Non-Terminal)

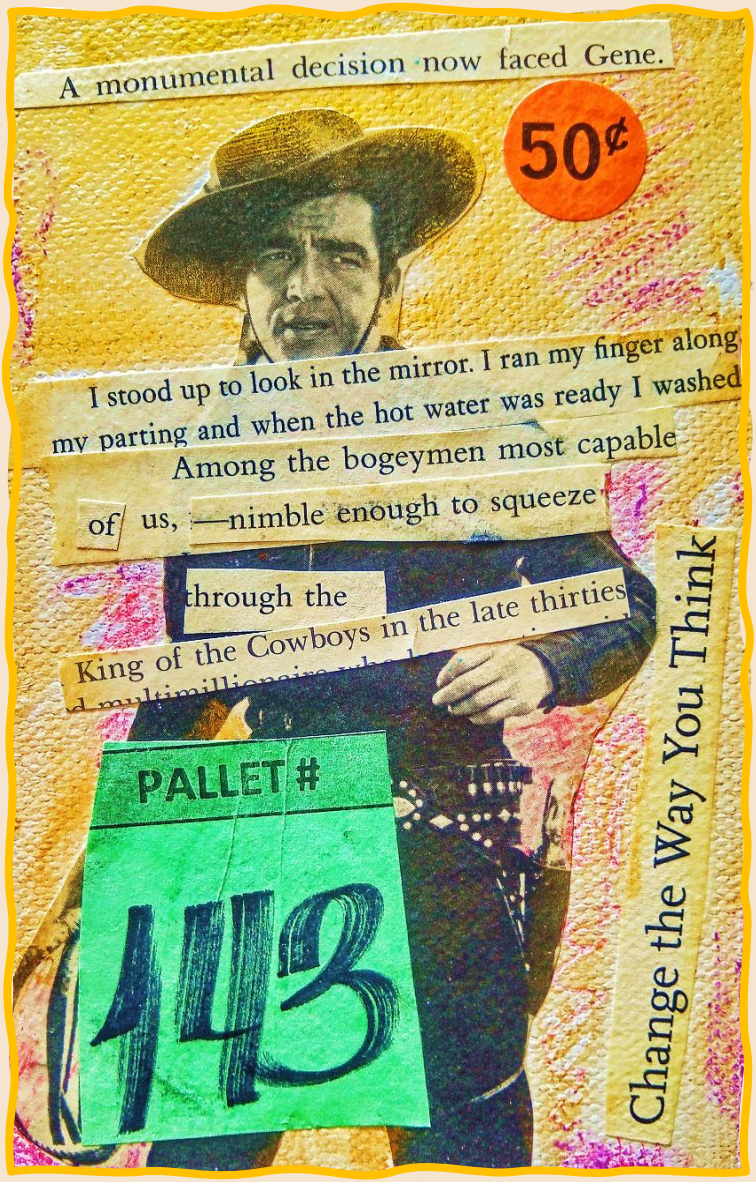
NOTHING IS FILED ONCE
NOTHING IS OVER
NOTHING IS BEFORE OR AFTER WITHOUT PERMISSION

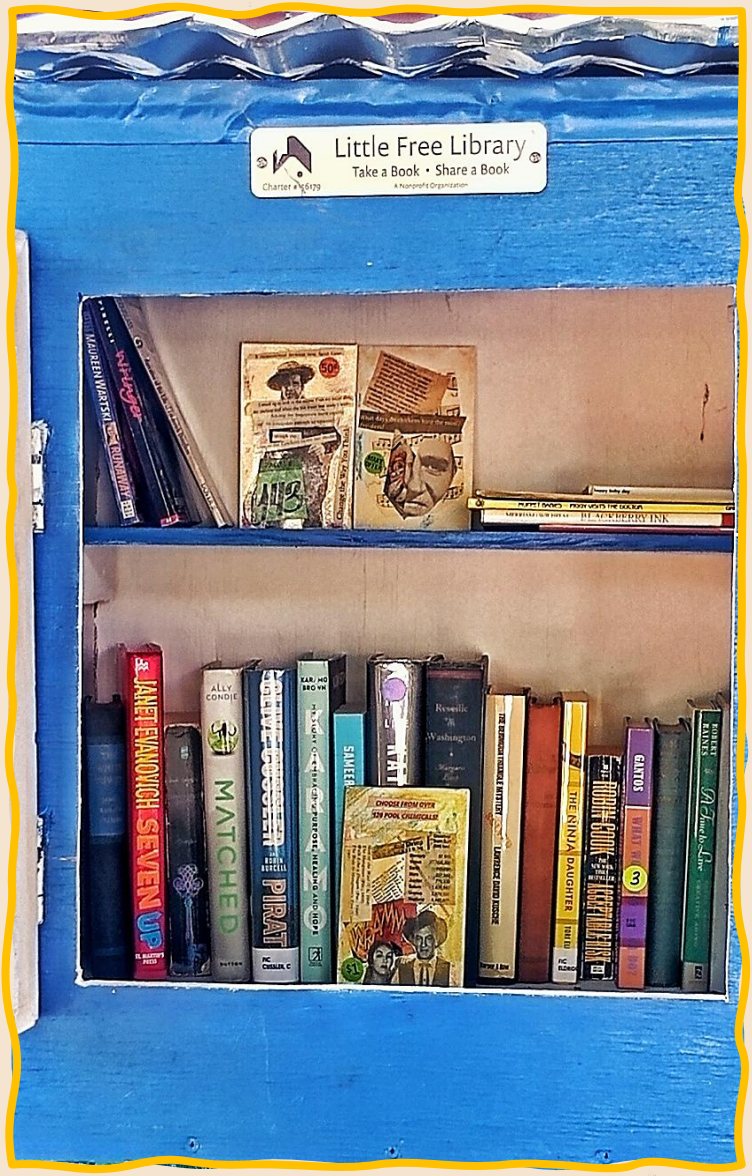
Virgil Kay
Editor Rooster China Wok Habitué
Treasury Clerk & Stamper of Conditional True Things

Virgil Kay

CHOOSE FROM OVER
120 POOL CHEMICALS!
Distance from Sun (000 km)
Mercury 57,910
Venus 108,200
Earth 149,600
Mars 227,940
Jupiter 778,330
Saturn 1,426,940
Uranus 2,870,990
Neptune 4,497,070
Man of the West (UA, 1958)
The Hangman (Par., 1959)
Walk Like a Dragon (Par., 1960)
The Ride to Hangman's Tree (Uni
1967)
WHAMM
$1

ra-di-o-act-ive waste [rā′dē-ōăk′tĭvwāst] noun, waste left over from creating nuclear power or atomic energy which gives off radiant energy in rays or particles by the disintegration of the atomic nuclei, such as found in radium and uranium
ra-di-um [rā′dē-əm] noun, a metallic element found in minute quantities, capable of spontaneously
What days do chickens hate the most?
Fry-days!
MAKE OFFER


A monumental decision now faced Gene.
50¢
I stood up to look in the mirror. I ran my finger along my parting and when the hot water was ready I washed
Among the bogeymen most capable
of us, —nimble enough to squeeze
through the
King of the Cowboys in the late thirties
PALLET #
143
Change the Way You Think


Little Free Library
Take a Book • Share a Book
A Nonprofit Organization
Charter #
MAUREEN WARTSKI
JANET EVANOVICH SEVEN UP
ALLY CONDIE MATCHED
PIRAT
SAMEER
Roseville to Washington
THE NINJA DAUGHTER
RUDOLPH
GANTOS
3
Time to Live

TREE STREETS, BANGOR, MAINE
14
3:00 AM
SOFT INDEX
loak \lōk\ n.
1. a slight hollow
2. a place of concealment
loblolly \lä-bə-ˌlä\ n.
1. a pine. Pinus taeda
2. coarse; worthless
3. plentiful but economically cheap
white-pot \(h)wit-pät\ n.
1. a dish made with salt pork, milk, onions, boiled potatoes. (See Halliwell.)
Fig. 7.
MITSUBISHI MIRAGE 1988
BIRCH ST. meets STATE ST.
Intervention is just another way of misunderstanding the weather.
—M.
Kenduskeag Stream
FIELD STUDY IN SMALL QUANTITIES
NOTES ON FABRIC AND DISTURBANCE
WHOOBUB
WHOOBUB
WHOOBUB
WHOOBUB
LOCKRAM
linen.
WHITE-POT.
Take salt pork and parboil . . .
Add . . .
Simmer . . .
. . . until . . .
(the rest is left to judgment)
safe-guard \'sāf-ˌgärd\ n.
A riding skirt fastened at the waist; also, something that protects from danger. (Halliwell.)
motion arrested mid-bend
SAINT-ANTHONY'S-PIG / LOB'S-COURSE / SAINT-ANTHONY'S-PIG (RECURSIVE AGRICULTURE)
Little Free Library
From a Municipal Report
Sidewalk Repair Schedule
ZONE
J F M A M J J A S O N D
1
2
3
4
ERROR REMAINS
OHIO ST.
KUSCHE: REPETITION DOES NOT VALIDATE TRUTH.
THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE
A MODEL OF NARRATIVE FAILURE.
No. It's already built. I'm just letting it misfile itself.
— O.S.
BUBBLES, FREDDY
see: Accordion. Disco. Fire. Insurance fraud. Moonlight. Roosters.
ROOSTERS
see: Freddy Bubbles. Kenduskeag. Meteorology. Miriam. Parade. Taxonomy.
WOOD-LOUSE LOCOMOTION.
The wood-louse advances by a series of small, overlapping movements . . .
a series of
a series of
a series of
JACK'S-ALIVE
WHOOBUB
LOBLOLLY
JACK'S-ALIVE.
A game played with burning paper.
RIME-STOCK
By One Size, Zinemeister of the Tree Streets
The error remains.
Z
BANGOR
ME

WHOOBUB

By Liam Bellmyer

One Size receives the materials like a mild weather event arriving through the mail slot: thirty-six 5×7 canvas boards stacked like a deck of small possible futures, brushes still carrying the memory of factory bristle, glue with that unnerving optimism only adhesives possess, and a scattering of damaged books that have already decided they are no longer entirely books but not yet anything else.

The Mitsubishi Mirage—1988, the year when everything still believed in compact efficiency and accidental longevity—becomes the first studio. Its interior has the acoustics of a confession booth designed by a parts catalog. At three in the morning, parked under a Tree Streets streetlight that flickers like it is trying to remember its own wiring diagram, One Size begins the first layer: torn dictionary pages, obsolete words, fragments of maritime cautionary tales, a diagram of a mechanical dove from a book that never quite admits what century it belongs to.

Miriam watches from the upstairs window at Birch meeting State, where the house leans slightly as though it has been listening too long to conversations it was not meant to understand. She does not intervene. She never intervenes in the early phases of his systems. Intervention, she once said, is just another way of misunderstanding the weather.

And already the system is double-exposed.
Not as metaphor, but as operating condition.

Because beneath the glue and canvas, something else has been installed without permission: a commentary engine that behaves like Pale Fire misapplied to a city that never asked for annotation.

The first collage is titled, without ceremony:
LOAK / LOBLOLLY / WHITE-POT (FIELD STUDY IN SMALL QUANTITIES)

It is mostly adhesive and restraint. A scrap of loblolly definition sits next to a faded engraving of a ship's galley that may or may not be real. A white-pot recipe is cut off mid-instruction, as if the dish itself refused completion. The whole thing looks like a dictionary page that has been briefly persuaded to remember it is also a map.

But now there is a second layer to that description, already forming in the margins:
The editor—who may or may not be One Size, or Virgil Kay, or a distributed error in naming systems—insists this is "documentation."
This is a lie.
The commentary is already arguing with the object it claims to explain.
By the third night, the process changes.

One Size begins to treat the damaged books not as sources but as participants. A torn zoology primer contributes a single sentence about woodlouse locomotion that becomes, through repetition and photocopy degradation, indistinguishable from liturgical chant. A municipal planning report from an unknown Maine town provides a diagram of sidewalk repair schedules that begins to resemble a musical score for very patient percussion.

But the Fiala OS has entered as an uninvited operating system.

The Stradella layer asserts itself first: geography, routine, civic repetition—Tree Streets, Kenduskeag Stream, the warehouse logic of winter, the Mirage idling at 3 a.m. These are the bass notes of reality, stubborn and repetitive.

Then Free Bass intrudes: lobcock definitions begin behaving like cosmologies, WHOOBUB becomes atmospheric pressure rather than word, SEALED-DOVE starts to feel like an unresolved theological mechanic embedded in the air.

Miriam starts leaving tea at the bottom of the stairs. Not as encouragement, but as acknowledgment that a parallel infrastructure is forming and it prefers hydration.
And now the commentary current begins its full rotation.

Every object begins to produce three simultaneous explanations:
Function one: what it is
Function two: what it reminds someone of
Function three: what it contradicts elsewhere in the system

A safe-guard riding skirt is no longer textile history—it is pressure redistribution in fabric form. A rime-stock is no longer a wooden calendar—it is time carved under mechanical instruction, as if Fiala's bellows had briefly taken control of chronology.

The second series emerges under the title:
WHOOBUB / LOCKRAM / SAFE-GUARD (NOTES ON FABRIC AND DISTURBANCE)

Here the collages begin to develop their own internal weather. Lockram linen is rendered in layered halftone until it becomes indistinguishable from fog over Kenduskeag Stream. The word WHOOBUB is stamped repeatedly in red ink until it loses its definition and becomes a kind of acoustic pressure. A safe-guard riding skirt—lifted from Halliwell's definitions—becomes a suspended shape in glue and paper fibers, as if motion has been arrested mid-bend and asked to remain honest about it.
But the Fiala OS now insists on oscillation: Stradella ↔ Free Bass, grounding ↔ drift.

So each collage begins to shift register:
The same safe-guard becomes:
civic garment (Stradella)
memory of a woman crossing a flooded street in 1912 (Free Bass)
bureaucratic description of fabric compliance standards (Stradella returning in disguise)
absurd Crow Protocol intrusion: the skirt argues with weather

At this stage, One Size notices something he does not announce to Miriam.
The collages are not being composed.
They are switching systems.
The damaged books are no longer sources of material; they are nodes in a commentary-index

that is beginning to overwrite the idea of "source" entirely.

He begins placing finished pieces into circulation. Not gallery circulation. Not commerce. Something more civic and less polite.

The Little Free Library boxes around Bangor become not distribution points but footnotes in physical space.

A Kusche fragment appears here without announcement: not quoted, but operational—debunking logic embedded in weather reports, reminding the system that repetition is not truth, only drift that has forgotten its origin.

The Bermuda Triangle, once a myth of oceanic disappearance, becomes a model of narrative failure: stories that drift because no one checks their coordinates against reality.

The Tree Streets adopt this as infrastructure.
They always do.
Because Bangor already understands distributed systems: snow, rumor, utility failure, municipal repair cycles.
Now it just has an editor.
Or several.
Or none.

By the sixth week, the system acquires a name it did not ask for.
Locals begin calling it the soft index.
But the FFR engine rejects singular authorship.
So the name fractures:
One Size (editorial body)
Miriam (silent counter-register)
Virgil Kay (possible fiction of authority)
The Mirage (mobile press unit)
The Littlw Free Library Boxes (distributed index nodes)
Each one behaves like a competing footnote system.

And footnotes, under Pale Fire logic, always want to replace the text.
Then comes the anomaly: the Romanian cowboy painting.

It enters not as illustration but as final commentary artifact.
A canvas that behaves like a collapsed index of everything preceding it.
A Romanian cowboy stands in unstable perspective, while words circulate in atmospheric strata:
JACK'S-ALIVE
LOBLOLLY
WHOOBUB
RIME-STOCK

SEALED-DOVE
But these are no longer definitions.
They are weather systems arguing with representation.

The painting itself is an argument between Stradella and Free Bass made visible.
The horse is civic repetition.
The sky is hallucination with bibliography.
The cowboy is neither subject nor editor but the unstable point where both roles fail to stabilize.

And now the Fiala OS reaches full compression:

Bellows pressure rises
Registers shift rapidly
Left hand Stradella (Bangor, routines, streets, boxes)
Right hand Free Bass (myth, error, hallucination, index drift)
Crow Protocol intrudes (the absurd refuses containment)
Commentary current overrides annotation
Index begins to rewrite entries it was meant to organize

And the painting resolves nothing.
It only accumulates interpretation until interpretation becomes atmosphere.

On the back of the canvas, the final instability appears as signature cascade:

By One Size, Zinemeister of the Tree Streets
The error remains
Z

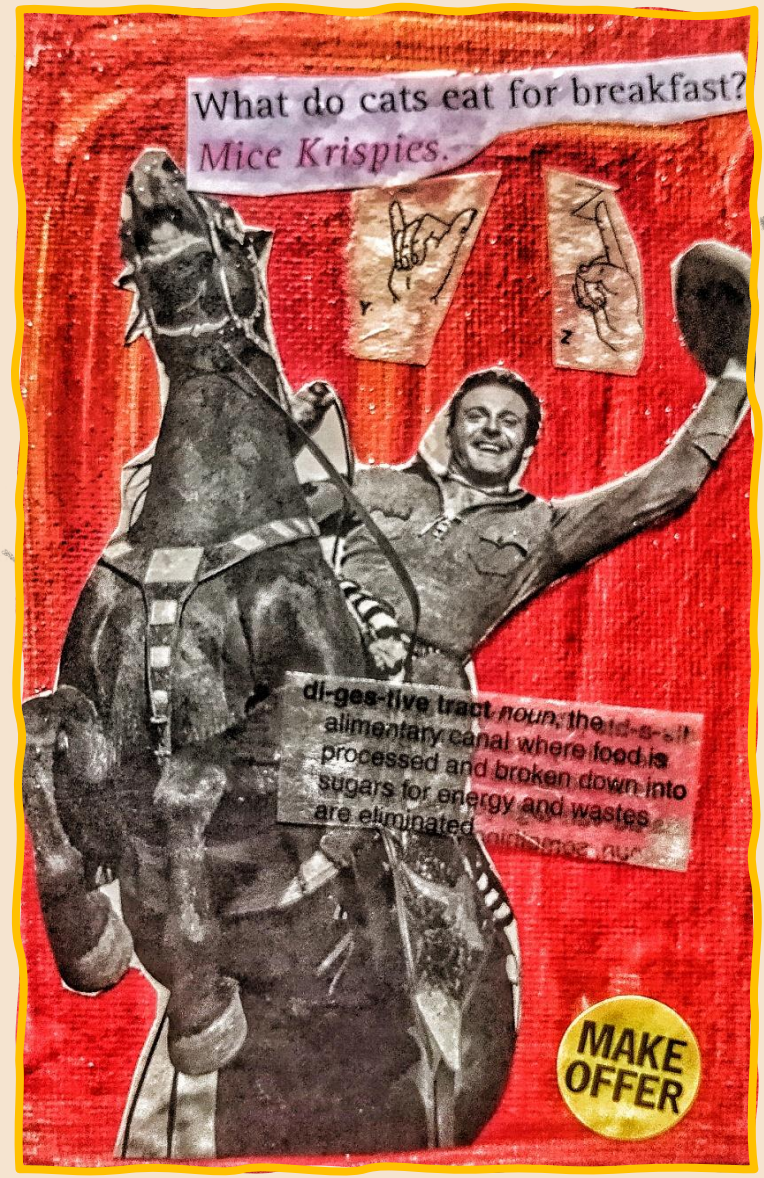
Three authorship states that cancel none of the others.
Each one is correct in a different register.
Each one is wrong in the others.
Each one attempts to become the central text.
And that is the final Pale Fire reversal embedded inside the system:

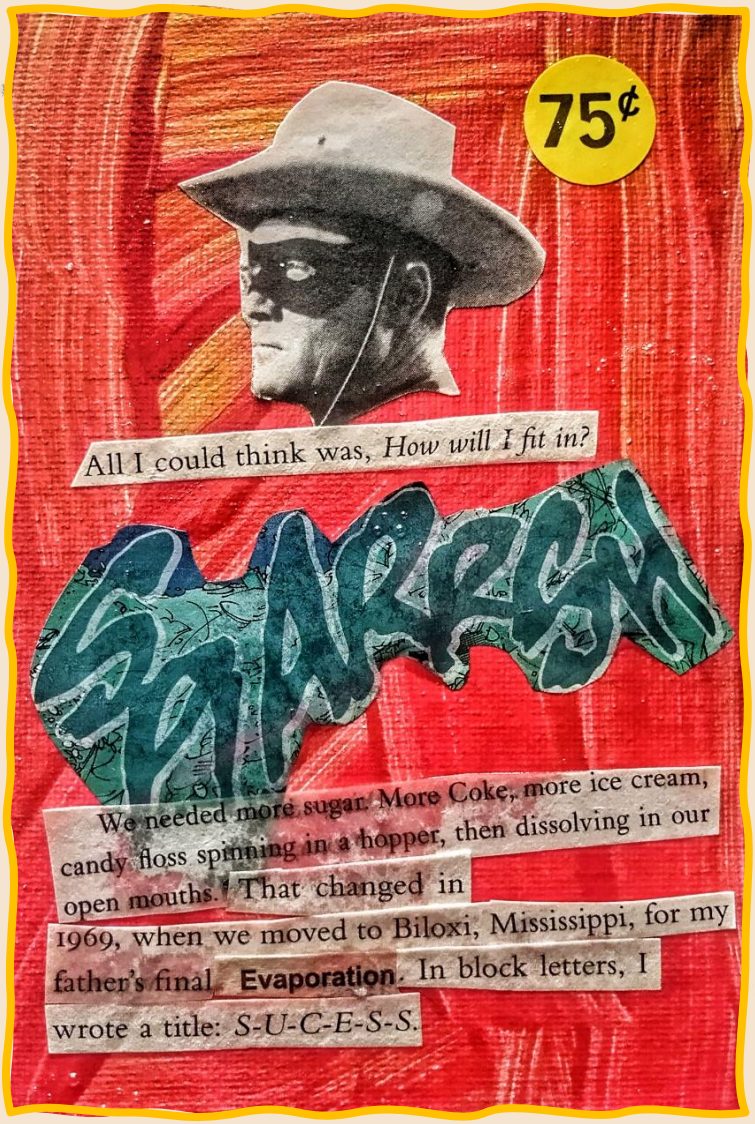
The collages are not illustrating the index.
The index is attempting to survive contact with the collages.
The Little Free Library boxes are not receiving work.
They are emitting revisions.
The Mirage is not transport.
It is a bellows chamber for moving language through space at 3 a.m.

And somewhere between Birch Street, Kenduskeag Stream, and the flicker of a streetlight that has forgotten whether it is punctuation or signal, One Size stops

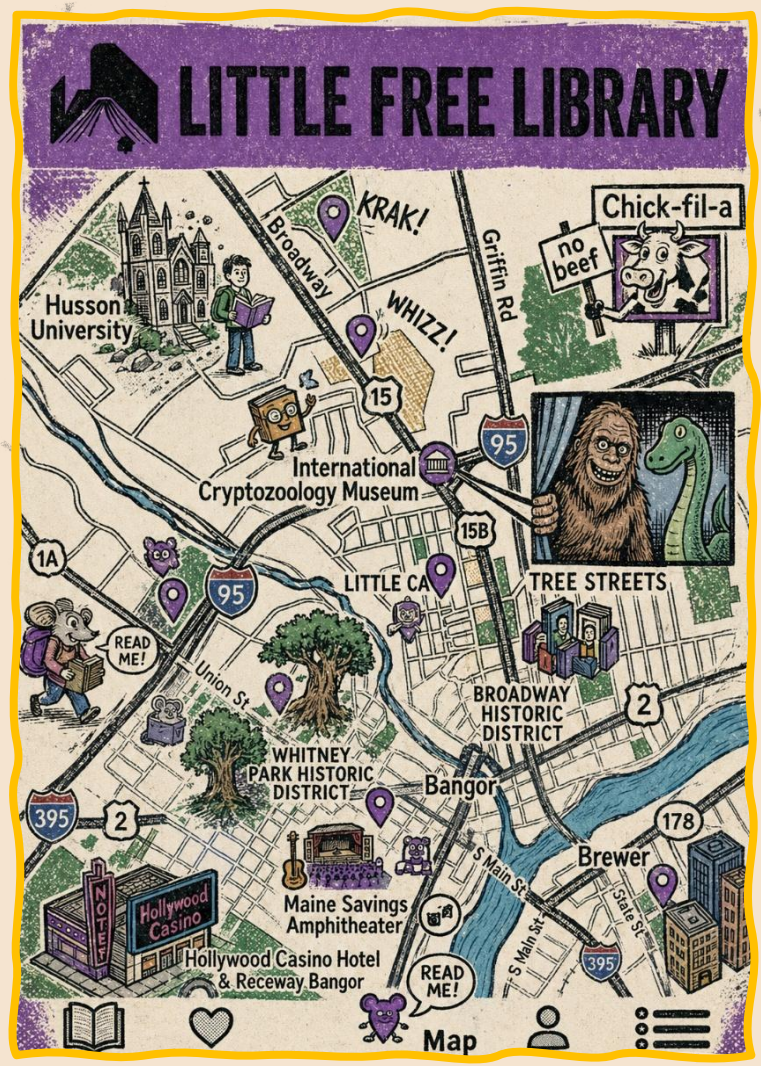
distinguishing between making, annotating, and misfiling.

Because the system has completed its coup:
the commentary is no longer about the text,
the index is no longer about the world,
and the world is no longer agreeing to stay unedited.


What do cats eat for breakfast?
Mice Krispies.
di-ges-tive tract noun, the alimentary canal where food is processed and broken down into sugars for energy and wastes are eliminated
MAKE OFFER


75¢
All I could think was, How will I fit in?
Success
We needed more sugar. More Coke, more ice cream, candy floss spinning in a hopper, then dissolving in our open mouths. That changed in 1969, when we moved to Biloxi, Mississippi, for my father's final Evaporation. In block letters, I wrote a title: S-U-C-E-S-S.

25¢
LEFRANC: There's a lot you don't know about me if you think I was willing to sacrifice myself, especially for your carcass.


LITTLE FREE LIBRARY
KRAK!
Broadway
WHIZZ!
Griffin Rd
Chick-fil-a
no beef
Husson University
15
95
International Cryptozoology Museum
15B
1A
95
LITTLE CA
TREE STREETS
READ ME!
Union St
BROADWAY HISTORIC DISTRICT
2
WHITNEY PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT
Bangor
395
2
178
Brewer
Hollywood Casino
Maine Savings Amphitheater
S Main St
State St
S Main St
395
Hollywood Casino Hotel & Raceway Bangor
READ ME!
Map

THE APPLE CATALOG OF NORTHERN POSSIBILITIES

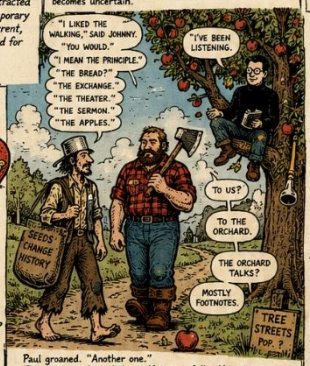
Being a Partial Reprint of the 1908 Tree Streets Experimental Pomological Survey, Annotated, Corrected, Expanded, Contradicted, Retracted, and Re-Retracted by Virgil Kay, Editor-at-Large, Temporary Custodian of the Kenduskeag Current, Recipient of the 1987 Tin Row Award for Outstanding Ambiguity.

COMMENTARY

The road from Belfast toward Bangor had become one of those roads which seem unable to decide whether they belong to geography or memory, the sky stretched above it like a sheet of galvanized metal forgotten in a divine warehouse, and along this road walked Johnny Appleseed carrying a sack of seeds large enough to alter several counties and perhaps a theology.

Beside him strode Paul Bunyan. The blue ox was absent. No one mentioned this. The absence itself occupied several cubic yards of conversational space.

They had been discussing Vachel Lindsay continuously since Bucksport. Or perhaps since 1913. The chronology becomes uncertain.



Paul groaned. "Another one."

The stranger climbed down. Not gracefully. More in the manner of an idea escaping a filing cabinet.

"MY NAME IS PROBABLY FELIX."

"PROBABLY?"

"IT CHANGES IN CITATIONS."

He shook their hands. His fingers smelled faintly of coffee and mimeograph fluid.

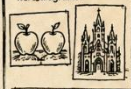
"The trouble with Lindsay," said Felix, "is everybody keeps mistaking him for a poet."

"He was a poet."

"He was a media theorist disguised as a Methodist weather system."

TOWARD BANGOR — TOWARD HISTORY — VANISHED ENTIRELY

Felix removed a small notebook. Inside were diagrams.



POETRY ↔ CINEMA
↑ ↓
REVIVAL ↔ CAPITALISM
↓ ↓
ORCHARDS ↔ BANGOR

WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY
WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY
WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY
WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY
WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY
WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY
× 800

"You know Mannheim?" Felix asked.

"THE SOCIOLOGY FELLOW?"

"THE ONE WHO SAID HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS ISN'T HISTORY."

"THE ONE WHO SAID PROGRESS IS BASICALLY A SOCIAL HABIT."

"THE VERY ONE."

The orchard shuddered. Somewhere a typewriter exploded.

Lindsay wanted apocalypse through culture. Not revolution. Performance. Not barricades. Beauty.

"He thought poetry could save democracy."

"And modernity replied by inventing radio."

Fro several minutes nobody spoke.

DING

ENTRY 247.

APPLE, COMMON.

A fruit.

Usually red, green, yellow, or combinations thereof.

May be eaten.

May be traded.

May be thrown.

May be used to establish an orchard.

Editor's Note 247A: The last statement remains controversial. According to municipal records, the orchards establish the man rather than the reverse. This becomes important later. Particularly after the appearance of the third traveler.

ENTRY 248.

APPLESEED, JOHNNY.

Nurseryman.

Walker.

Distributor of apple seeds.

Associated with frontier settlement.

See also: Trees. Walking. Millennial Expectations.

Editor's Supplementary Note 248B: The vanished apple later appears in a 1974 photograph beside Subpar Bear. No explanation has ever been offered.

CORRECTION TO SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE 248B: The photograph was taken in 1887.

COUNTER-CORRECTION: Both dates are correct.

ENTRY 249.

PROGRESS.

A movement forward.

See also: Delay. Expectation. Weather. Bangor.

Editor's Note 249A: Progress first entered Bangor disguised as a trolley schedule. The trolley disappeared. Progress remained. No one was entirely satisfied.

By sunset the three travelers had reached the Kenduskeag. The stream moved through the city carrying leaves, reflections, rumors, and perhaps one or two abandoned metaphysical systems. The water knew things. Streams always do. Particularly streams repeatedly mentioned in commentary.

The stream continued moving. The city directory continued annotating itself. The commentary expanded. The index grew restless. Far away an apple tree quietly entered a new edition.

INDEX (PARTIAL)

APPLES.
- Democracy.
- Distribution.
- Lindsay.
- Subpar Bear.
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BUNYAN, PAUL.
- Forestry.
- History.
- Silence.
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- Coffee.
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WALKING.
- Appleseed.
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UTOPIA.
- Apples.
- Bangor.
- Commentary.
- Roads.

VIRGIL KAY.

See: Entire Volume.

FINAL EDITORIAL DISCLOSURE

Subsequent examination of the 1908 Tree Streets Experimental Pomological Survey has revealed that no orchard ever existed. The survey was actually a biography. The biography was of Virgil Kay. The references to apples describe decisions. The references to roads describe memories. The references to Lindsay describe methods. The references to Bangor describe consciousness itself. The commentator was never annotating the orchard. The orchard was annotating the commentator.

Readers wishing to appeal this finding should consult the vanished apple.

END? SEE YOU IN THE FOOTNOTE.

The Brass Orchard of the Tree Streets

Attributed to John Chapman

The city does not exist, yet the fog settles on its streets with the weight of a forgotten verdict, clinging to the brickwork like a debt that can never be paid, while the man in the rented room watches the ceiling stain spread slowly across the plaster, mapping a continent of failure that he knows by heart, knowing that to stand up would be to admit the room is real, and so he lies still, letting the silence fill his lungs until it feels like water, like the river that flows beneath the bridge where no one ever arrives, only waits.

Gray fog fills the street
the man waits for what will not
come; the door stays shut
time rots like fruit on the ground
no harvest comes to this town

He remembers the woman who left years ago, or perhaps she never existed at all, a figment of a fever dream born in a bar where the light failed across the bottles and the bartender stopped counting the glasses, watching instead the slow rusting of everything, including the promises made in the dark corners of that room, promises that were heavier than the sack of seeds carried by the walker who passed through town once, planting things in soil that was already dead, believing that the act of planting was enough to justify the earth, even as the roots found only stone and the silence of a god who had retired to an administrative position overseeing the decay.

Dead roots find only stone
the promise rots in the dark
no green breaks the soil
he walks a road to nowhere
carrying a heavy sack

In the distance, the shipyard groans, a skeleton of wood and iron where men pretend to work, repairing vessels that sank decades ago, their hammers striking empty air with a rhythm that mimics a heartbeat, a futile percussion against the void, while the foreman checks his watch, knowing the time is wrong, that the hands have stopped moving but the illusion of progress must be maintained, for if they stop hammering, they

might realize they are already dead, already part of the landscape of mud and stagnant water that surrounds them, a landscape that reflects nothing but the gray sky and the hollow eyes of those who walk it.

Hammers hit the air
mending ships that sank long since
men pretend to live
the foreman knows time has stopped
yet the hammer falls again

Night falls not as a curtain but as a suffocating blanket, dragging down the streetlamps until they flicker and die, leaving the city to its true nature, a place of shadows and whispers where the past is more solid than the present, where the ghosts of lovers and failures sit at the tables of the cafés, drinking coffee that tastes of ash and regret, discussing a revolution that never happened, a love that was never spoken, a life that was spent waiting for a train that derailed before it ever left the station, and the conversation circles endlessly, a labyrinth with no center, no exit, only the endless turning of words that mean nothing, signifying only the depth of the despair that holds them all together.

Coffee tastes of ash
ghosts discuss a love unsaid

trains that never left
words circle the empty room
signifying only loss

Morning brings no relief, only the return of the light that reveals the dust on the furniture, the peeling paint on the walls, the cracks in the sidewalk where weeds struggle to grow, doomed to wither under the weight of the city's indifference, and the man rises finally, not because he has hope, but because the inertia of existence demands movement, even if it is only to walk to the window and look out at the orchard that isn't there, seeing instead the red apples hanging from invisible branches, heavy with a sweetness that will never be tasted, rotting in a season that does not exist, waiting for a hand that will never reach out to pick them, to hold them, to crush them into juice that stains the fingers like blood, like the memory of a life that could have been, but wasn't.

Red apples hang low
rotting on a ghostly bough
sweetness turns to mold
no hand reaches out to pick
only the wind takes the fruit

The river continues to flow, indifferent to the tragedy playing out on its banks, carrying away

the debris of broken dreams and discarded lives, flowing toward a sea that may not exist, a horizon that recedes as one approaches it, a trick of the light designed to keep the weary walking, stumbling forward into the mist, believing that somewhere ahead the road will end, the pain will cease, the story will resolve itself into something meaningful, something whole, but the road only stretches on, infinite and circular, leading back to the same room, the same chair, the same window looking out onto the same gray sky, where the catalog of possibilities remains unwritten, unspoken, unfulfilled, a list of things that never were, recorded in a book that has no pages, bound in leather made from the skin of time itself, which is thin and brittle and tears easily in the hands of those who try to read it.

River carries all
toward a sea that is not there
road loops back to start
the book has no pages left
time tears in the reader's hand

And so he sits again, the man who is also the city, the city that is also the dream, the dream that is also the nightmare, waiting for the end that will not come, listening to the sound of his own breathing, the only proof that he is still alive, still trapped in this exquisite hell of his own making,

where every moment is an eternity and every eternity is a moment, suspended in the amber of a sorrow so deep it has become a kind of peace, a quiet acceptance of the futility of it all, the beautiful, terrible uselessness of trying to build a life on a foundation of sand and smoke, knowing that when the tide comes in, as it surely will, nothing will remain but the water, the cold, clear water that washes everything away, leaving behind only the silence, the vast, echoing silence of a world that never cared whether we were here or not.

Silence fills the room
water washes all away
nothing stays behind
the world did not care at all
if we lived or if we died

The first error was assuming the orchard belonged to the town, or to the county, or to the soft-handed committee that had once drawn borders around it in blue pencil and called the borders ownership, when in fact the orchard had been there before the committee, before the blue pencil, before the man who carried the seeds and believed, with the doomed innocence of all carriers, that he was delivering the future instead of being delivered by it. The road from Belfast toward Bangor had become one of those roads

which seem unable to decide whether they belong to geography or memory, the sky stretched above it like a sheet of galvanized metal forgotten in a divine warehouse, and along this road walked Johnny Appleseed carrying a sack of seeds large enough to alter several counties and perhaps a theology. Beside him strode Paul Bunyan. The blue ox was absent. No one mentioned this. The absence itself occupied several cubic yards of conversational space. They had been discussing Vachel Lindsay continuously since Bucksport. Or perhaps since 1913. The chronology becomes uncertain. It always does. It always did. The years had a way of leaning into one another like drunks at a bar in a river town where the bartender had stopped counting and started simply watching the light fail across the bottles with the expression of a man who knows that counting was never the point.

Boots grind through wet dust
seed sack dark with spent weather
no blue shadow waits
only a vacant silence
walking beside the two men

"I liked the walking," said Johnny. "You would." "I mean the principle." "The bread?" "The exchange." "The theater." "The sermon." "The apples." Paul nodded. Everything in the world

eventually became apples if Johnny was allowed sufficient time. This was his affliction and also his method and perhaps the two had never been separate, had perhaps been married in some roadside ceremony no one remembered attending, the officiant a wind, the witnesses a row of saplings that had since become stumps that had since become the idea of stumps, which is worse. The spruce forests moved past them with the solemnity of elderly jurists who have rendered too many verdicts to believe in verdicts. Far away the Penobscot rolled through the landscape like a sentence refusing to end, a sentence composed by someone who understood that ending was just another form of punctuation and who mistrusted punctuation the way some men mistrust sobriety — not because it is wrong but because it imposes a clarity the world has not earned.

A stranger in leaves
listens to root-born margins
his glasses catch dusk
the tree believes his silence
more than the town's old records

There was already someone in one of the trees. No one knew how long he had been there. Perhaps centuries. Perhaps twenty minutes. The distinction between centuries and twenty minutes had always been administrative rather

than experiential, a fact known to anyone who has waited for a letter that is not going to come, or who has sat in a bar watching the condensation on a glass trace routes more honest than any map he has ever consulted. He wore a black turtleneck. Round glasses. An expression suggesting he had once started three magazines and abandoned four, which is arithmetically suspicious but emotionally precise. A notebook protruded from his coat pocket. A trumpet mute hung from his belt. The tree appeared to approve. Trees have opinions. This is well established. They express them through root pressure, through the angle at which they offer or withhold shade, through the slow politics of where they drop their fruit. This tree had decided in favor of the stranger, which meant the stranger had been accepted into a system of allegiance older and more binding than any municipal charter. "Afternoon," said Johnny. The man nodded. "Been listening." "To us?" "To the orchard." "The orchard talks?" "Mostly footnotes." Paul groaned. "Another one."

Wind thumbs the dry leaves
an index no hand finished
names drift from ledgers
roots keep all the old minutes
the bound books forget the rain

The stranger climbed down. Not gracefully. More in the manner of an idea escaping a filing cabinet, which is to say with friction and a sound suggesting that the container had never been designed for what it held, that the categorization had been wrong from the start, that the alphabet itself was complicit in the misunderstanding. "My name is probably Felix." "Probably?" "It changes in citations." He shook their hands. His fingers smelled faintly of coffee and mimeograph fluid, two substances that had underwritten more revolutions than gunpowder, though history preferred to credit gunpowder because history has always been embarrassed by clerical work. Felix had the look of a man who had once believed in something specific and had since graduated to believing in something general, which is not the same as giving up, though it is adjacent, the way a boarding house is adjacent to a hotel — the function overlaps, the furniture does not. He stood among the tree roots with a posture that suggested he had been leaning against various things for most of his life — doorframes, arguments, the thin edge of someone else's patience — and that leaning had become his method of remaining upright, a paradox he had stopped trying to resolve around the same time he stopped answering mail. "The trouble with Lindsay," said Felix, "is everybody keeps mistaking him for a poet." "He was a poet." "He

was a media theorist disguised as a Methodist weather system." This caused silence. Not the silence of agreement, not the silence of disagreement, but the third kind of silence, the kind that arrives when a sentence has revealed a door in a wall everyone had assumed was solid, and no one is yet willing to walk through because the light on the other side is unfamiliar and possibly institutional. Several apples dropped from trees. One rolled toward Bangor. Another toward history. A third vanished entirely. It vanished the way certain facts vanish, not by being disproven but by being replaced with facts that are more convenient, more aerodynamic, more suitable for the kind of sentences that appear in reports filed by people who were never present and who sign their names with the fluency of those who have learned that signatures are just another form of fiction.

Ripe fruit understands
the hungry mouth asks sweetness
but seeds ask for time
each small core conceals a town
that will misremember us

The apples had been waiting for this part, the part where hunger mistakes itself for destiny, where a man bites into what he thinks is fruit and receives instead a city, a rented room, a failed

business, a woman glimpsed once in a doorway and then pursued for thirty years through the corridors of memory, each corridor darker and more convincing than the last. The conversation meanwhile had entered dangerous territory. Dangerous not in the way of cliffs or firearms but in the way of ideas that, once admitted, rearrange the furniture of a mind and make it impossible to sit where one formerly sat, which means one must either stand for the rest of one's life or find new furniture, and new furniture is expensive and rarely comfortable and always smells of someone else's decisions. Felix removed a small notebook. Inside were diagrams. Some depicted apples. Some depicted cathedrals. Some depicted arrows moving between the words POETRY, CINEMA, REVIVAL, CAPITALISM, ORCHARDS, and BANGOR. One diagram consisted entirely of the word WHY repeated 800 times. Not 799. Not 801. Eight hundred, as though WHY had been counted with the same precision applied to inventory, which suggested that Felix understood questions to be a kind of stock, a warehouse of unresolved demands, each one representing not curiosity but a small unpaid debt between the mind and the world. "You know Mannheim?" Felix asked. Johnny brightened. Paul looked suspicious. The clouds assembled into committees, which is what clouds do in Maine, they do not drift, they convene, they issue

preliminary findings, they table motions, they adjourn into fog. "The sociology fellow?" "The one who said historical consciousness isn't history." "The one who said progress is basically a social habit." "The very one." Felix sat cross-legged beneath the tree. The tree subtly adjusted its roots to improve acoustics. This is documented. Not in any book. In the roots themselves, which keep their own records, patient and illegible, written in a language that predates alphabets and will survive them. "Mannheim noticed something." "Dangerous phrase," Paul muttered. Paul muttered the way mountains would mutter if mountains had been subjected to enough committee meetings to develop grievances, which is to say low and steady and with the implication that the muttering was merely the audible portion of a much larger dissatisfaction extending downward through bedrock and into the private geological opinions that underwrite the visible landscape. "He noticed that people think they discover history when often they're inheriting a particular way of organizing it." The wind passed through the orchard. The leaves sounded like pages being turned in a giant invisible index, an index that was also an orchard, that was also a catalog, that was also the sound of every marginal notation ever penciled into the white space beside a text by someone who believed that the margins were

where the real argument lived, which they often were, the margins being the republic of the unconvinced, the narrow country where doubt keeps its offices.

Night enters the stream
city lights bloom like seed stars
a rooster watches
from a window never built
and all the reports agree

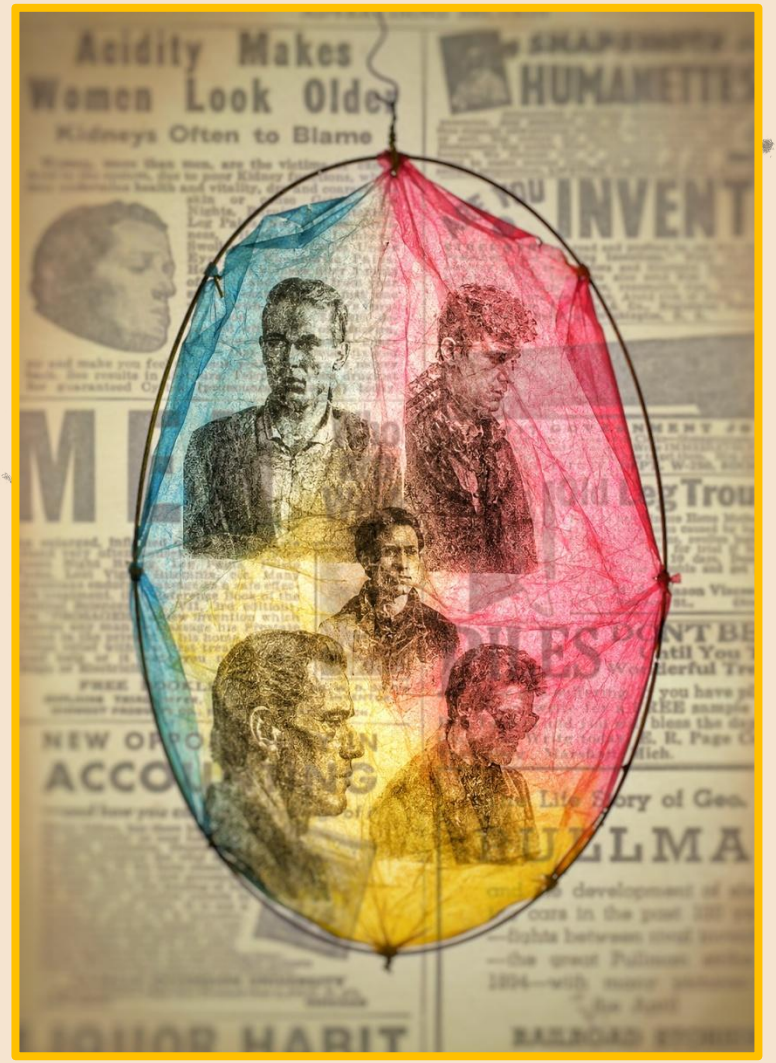
"The chiliast believes the kingdom arrives all at once." Johnny nodded. "Suddenly." "The liberal believes it arrives gradually." Paul nodded. "Committees." "Committees." "Subcommittees." "Subcommittees." "Grant applications." "Exactly." The orchard surged. Somewhere a typewriter exploded. Not a metaphorical explosion. An actual typewriter in an actual office in a building on a street that may or may not be named for a tree reaching the terminal point of its mechanical tolerance and distributing its keys across a desk where a man had been trying to type a report that was actually a confession that was actually a catalog that was actually a prayer, and the explosion was not destruction but release, the way a seed case explodes, the way a pod opens, the way anything that has held something too long eventually surrenders its contents to the air and says here, you carry it, I'm done. Felix

continued. He continued with the patience of someone who has learned that ideas do not arrive, they accumulate, they gather like snow on a windshield in a parking lot outside a bar in a town where the last bus left an hour ago and the bartender has begun wiping the counter with the circular motions of finality, and understanding comes not when the snow is cleared but when the driver accepts that the snow is the message. "Lindsay was strange because he lived between those worlds." "How?" "He wanted apocalypse." "That's dramatic." "He wanted transformation." "But?" "He wanted it through culture." "Not revolution." "Performance." "Not barricades." "Beauty." The apples seemed interested. A robin landed nearby carrying what appeared to be a municipal zoning ordinance, which is not unusual, birds being the original bureaucrats, their migrations a form of regulatory compliance, their songs a kind of public comment period that no planning board has ever acknowledged but that predates every planning board by epochs sufficient to render the concept of jurisdiction decorative. "He thought poetry could save democracy." Johnny smiled. It was the smile of a man who plants seeds in soil he knows may be unsuitable, who walks roads he knows may not lead anywhere, who performs the act of planting as a form of argument against evidence, which is not stupidity, which is not naiveté, which is the

particular courage of those who have decided that the alternative to planting — which is standing still, which is sitting down, which is lying in a rented room watching the ceiling describe the history of stains, each stain a continent, each continent a failure, the ceiling itself a map of every place one did not go — the alternative is not acceptable, and so one walks, and so one plants, and so the seeds enter the ground with no guarantee except the guarantee of having been placed there, which must be enough because it is everything. Paul scratched his beard. The beard had its own opinions. The beard was practically a constituency. Felix looked upward. "And modernity replied by inventing radio." For several minutes nobody spoke. The statement hung there. A bell. A gong. A dropped wrench in the machinery of the century. It hung the way smoke hangs in a room where a conversation has just ended badly, where someone has said the thing that cannot be unsaid, where the future of the evening has been redistributed by a single sentence and the glasses on the table suddenly look different, look like evidence, look like the remains of a version of the night that has been cancelled and replaced with a version nobody ordered and nobody wants but everybody recognizes because it is the version that was always coming, the one that was waiting behind the version they preferred. Because that was

precisely the joke. Lindsay dreamed of participatory culture. Then America produced one. Only not through poetry. Through microphones. Through cinema. Through records. Through television. Through every machine except the one he expected. And this is the cruelty that is not cruel, this is the comedy that is not comic, this is the American sorrow of discovering that your prophecy came true in a form you no longer recognize, and that the future arrived wearing someone else's vocabulary.

Ex Bibliotheca
majori Coll. Rom.
Societ. Jesu


Acidity Makes
Women Look Older
Kidneys Often to Blame
HUMANETTES
INVENT

CHAPTER 45

By Q.C. 9

Too heavy the lift but it stays in the frame now, stays where the margin thickens and learns its own weight, where Louie is still Louie and Jack still carries the mechanical insistence of Jack and Kerry still cuts through the domestic air like a voltage you can almost name without touching. Boyd remains at the periphery like a seasonal distortion, and the Goodyear field holds as a place that refuses to stop being a place even when the sentence tries to move it elsewhere.

Inside that retention zone-inside, inside again as if the word itself were nailed and re-nailed-we begin with adhesion. Not yet collapse, not yet drift, only the mild terror of things staying where

they are while still refusing to behave. The ledger is present. The ledger is always present. It sits behind action like a second skeleton of accounting, of breath recorded as inventory. Jack crosses it without reading. Louie speaks as if the ledger is weather. Kerry leans into it like a door that already knows her weight. Boyd watches the margins of it rather than the thing itself.

The Goodyear field remains intact in the way industrial spaces remain intact even after thought leaves them. Rubber memory. Floor grit. A slow administrative hum. The plant does not narrate itself; it files itself. Inside this filing system, Jack becomes an applied force, Louie becomes a deviation in transit, Kerry becomes a signal that refuses to resolve into a stable waveform. Boyd is still Boyd, but only in the sense that a shadow is still

attached to its object even when the object has begun to lean away.

"I am inside," someone says, or something says it through someone, and the phrase returns as if it had been waiting behind each object. The margin holds. The margin holds again. The phrase is not spoken so much as re-inserted into the structure of events, like a staple driven through moving paper.

Now the drift begins to accumulate but still under permission of the anchors. Louie is seen at the edge of the Goodyear field but also in a domestic threshold that may or may not be the same location re-rendered. Jack operates a gesture that resembles instruction, though instruction is no longer cleanly separable from impact. Kerry moves through a space that is partly room, partly transit, partly the

negative impression of a room after it has been removed. Boyd is briefly absent and then returns as if absence were a kind of continuity.

The ledger persists. It mutates slightly: requisition becomes breath, inventory becomes skin, accounting becomes a pressure in the jaw. The mandible motif begins to surface more frequently now, not as symbol but as mechanical fact of speech itself. Every utterance feels as though it is being chewed before release.

At the Goodyear plant the floor tilts without moving. Jack does not notice. Louie notices but does not register noticing. Kerry leans into a door that is no longer certain it is a door. Boyd says something about timing but timing has already detached from sequence. The margin holds but begins to thin at its

edges, like paper saturated with too many revisions.

"I am inside," returns again, but less as sentence and more as residue of sentence. The phrase is now partly architecture, partly malfunction.

Now the controlled degradation increases. Spatial integrity loosens first. The Goodyear field is still present but also already elsewhere, distributed across transit corridors, domestic half-rooms, and a kind of unlit administrative exterior where no event fully completes. Jack is no longer consistently Jack; he is the persistence of applied pressure. Louie is no longer consistently Louie; he is a continuity error that keeps producing coherence effects. Kerry begins to appear before she arrives. Boyd begins to observe before observation is initiated.

The ledger stops behaving like object and becomes operational field. Entries occur without origin. Requisitions precede need. Inventory precedes matter. Accounting precedes action. The system is now self-writing.

The margin no longer holds as boundary; it holds as echo of boundary. "The margin holds" becomes "margin held" becomes "margining," becomes nothing that can be cleanly reattached to speech.

Now drift overtakes anchor retention but not suddenly-by permission slip after permission slip revoked.

Louie appears inside a mechanical sentence that no longer belongs to Goodyear or to domestic space. Jack is folded into a gesture that might be instruction or might be impact or might be neither. Kerry becomes a

signal without receiver. Boyd becomes a viewing angle without object.

The ledger is now pure recursion. It accounts for itself accounting. It records entries that generate their own recorders. It becomes impossible to determine whether anything is being tracked or whether tracking has replaced anything being tracked.

"I am inside" is no longer stable. It arrives as "inside / insideing / insideless." The phrase no longer anchors. It propagates.

The industrial lexicon and bodily lexicon fuse completely here. Rubber becomes nerve. Jaw becomes machine coupling. Breath becomes requisition. The Goodyear field is no longer a site but a condition of friction distributed across all perception.

Jack is now indistinguishable from torque. Louie is indistinguishable from

transit delay. Kerry is indistinguishable from threshold failure. Boyd is indistinguishable from observation without origin.

The margin fails but continues to fail in a consistent rhythm, which gives it the appearance of structure.

Now the drift becomes dominant. Syntax no longer resolves. Clauses begin without subject and end without closure. Motion is described without agent. Events occur without temporal anchoring. The ledger writes without numbers. The plant operates without production. The domestic space exists without interior.

Louie / or what was Louie / appears in multiple non-coincident positions. Jack is a distributed mechanical insistence across fields of impact. Kerry is a directional instability in the architecture of rooms. Boyd is a

witnessing function detached from witness.

"I am inside" is no longer legible but still active as pressure.

Now the system approaches collapse of referential load. The Goodyear field dissolves into industrial adjacency without center. The ledger becomes pure abstraction of accounting without account. The margin is no longer edge but residual vibration of edge.

Language begins to repeat without reference: inside inside inside margin margin ledger ledger Jack Louie Kerry Boyd not as names but as acoustic residues of naming.

The drift intensifies until no sentence can complete without shedding its subject.

Jack-impact without arrival.
Louie-transit without departure.

Kerry-threshold without door.
Boyd-observation without eye.
ledger-accounting without account.

Now even that begins to loosen.

Inside is no longer inside. Margin is no longer margin. Goodyear is no longer field. All are pressure states.

The final phase arrives not as conclusion but as reduction of available structure. Everything that was stable becomes faintly available only as echo. The system no longer supports multiple anchors. Only residue remains.

Louie returns, but not as continuity-only as remaining trace of continuity attempting to form itself.

Jack collapses into mechanical stillness without mechanism. Kerry becomes a signal that does not transmit but still insists on direction. Boyd becomes a line of sight with no origin point. The

ledger stops recording and becomes the sensation of recording having once occurred.

The margin fails completely but leaves behind the feeling that something once held.

Inside collapses into repetition without grammar.

inside inside inside

and then less

in-

and then not even that.

The Goodyear field is no longer present but still implied in the friction of disappearance.

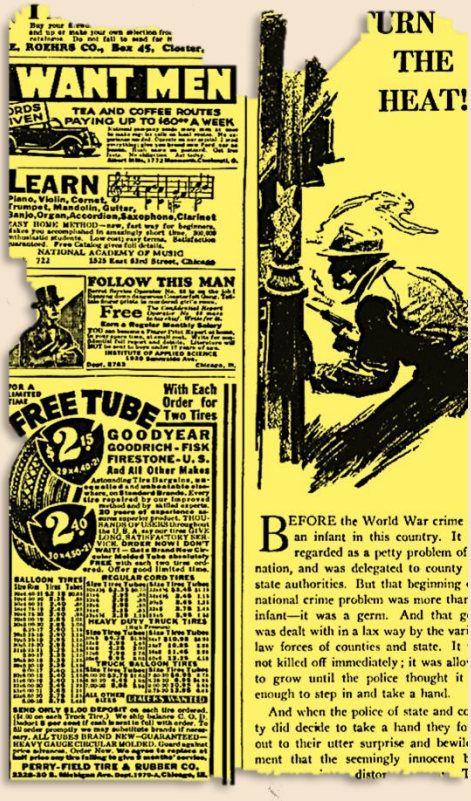
Now only one structure remains capable of being spoken without breaking the system further: a single residual anchor chosen from the surviving debris of identity pressure.

It narrows.

It holds for a moment that is not time
but constraint.

Then it releases:

Louie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BEFORE the World War crime
an infant in this country. It
regarded as a petty problem of
nation, and was delegated to county
state authorities. But that beginning
national crime problem was more thar
infant—it was a germ. And that g
was dealt with in a lax way by the vari
law forces of counties and state. It
not killed off immediately; it was allo
to grow until the police thought it
enough to step in and take a hand.
And when the police of state and co
ty did decide to take a hand they fo
out to their utter surprise and bewil
ment that the seemingly innocent

THE AUGUSTA CIVIC CENTER
EXISTS SIMULTANEOUSLY IN SEVERAL CENTURIES.
LESS A STRUCTURE THAN A CONVENING OF CONVENTION. CONVERGENCE OF COMMUNITY, BASKETBALL, TOURNAMENTS, CELEBRATION, CODES. CLUBS, CHURCH SERVICES, PUNE FISHOWS, PLAYCATES. PUNK SHOWS, PLAYDATES. WRESTLING, PREFIGHTSE. PARENTS' MEETINGS, SPORTS' FAIRS, SPECTACLE, SPORTS, THE POSSIBLE. AND ONE BOOM BOOM. A STAGE THAT ATBE ASSEMBLED, TAKENBOWN, & TRIGLICALLY REBUILT.
SECURITY OFFICE
MAY '77
NOBODY REMEMBERS ITS FIRSTY. MORF MEETING.. LESON 7.. LEARNE LEARNEOX.. ONE WAY :- AT A TIMES IN LEAKS.
QUIET AT ALL
MORE BUILDING. BRICKS.
AUGUSTA CIVIC CENTER
INDOOR PICNIC. POMP! POMP!
POMP! POMP! POMP!
ICES LIVE LOOK BAND!
★ BRIDAL EXPO
★ LIVESTOCK AUCN
★ TAX SEMINAR
★ CHEER CLINIC
★ COFFEE?
MAY 1977
ELVIS!
THE '80S DIDN'T IT ECHOES END A- IT ECHOES REALLY CINNER BLOCK.
SOUNDS DREAMED SOLITED
1992
WIZARD'S ACADEMY OF SCIENCE
INTERPLANETARY CONVENTION OF THE FRIENDFLIEST THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF OCILLA.
ATLANTIS WAS IF LAST TO GRADUATE.
VOLCANIC ERUPTION LOW LAVA
REALITY EXISTS— IT JUST KEEPS NOT DOING WHAT BWUS WANTED. SHAME.
THE GRETSCH. THE PEAVEY. THE FINAL WALTZ. THE CRAYOLA. THE ERASER. THE LASAME. THE BIG GAMLET. LEGENDS.
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MORE DOOR THAN WALL.
CONFERENCE ROOMS 24/7.
HOSPITALITY CERTIALITY, CERTAINLY.
CAREFUL, PEITA.
JBL
YA SOLUTA, MA FINITA.
THE PRESENCE CARETAKER. THE SILENT 2.B. APPROVAL. THE BULLY KENTAURS. ANOTHER WATER.
ONE FAINTLY AFTERSCHOOL...
THE PLAY BUTTON DECIDES.
STAGE.
APPLAUSE.
DISTANCE.
A VOICE.
THEN... ELVIS.
MAY '77
NOT THE KERN. A SOUND MAN. A SPACEMAN. A JANITOR. WHEN A MOMENT'S WHEN. NO ONE IS LOOKING.
SOMETIMES EVERYONE IS.
LIVE IN CONCERT THE GLORIOUS LIBERACE
ACCD
MEMORIES. EVERYONE'S. TAKE 5!9 ARB AV.
OUTSIDE, MAINE CONTINUES AS USUAL. TRAFFIC LIGHTS HOLD BUSINESS AND BLESSINGS. THE SIGN READS IN AUGUSTA A BUILDING: PRESENTS ITSELF MANY TIMES EACH BAIIGY UNTIL IT BECOMES 60NY TIMES EACH DAY.OE UNTIL IT BECOMES ITS OWN ORCI 69H ! IEFERAT. DIFFERENT SODEE, SAME. REASON. DIFFERENT PEOPLE, SAME. ERASES. WAITING FOR SOMEONE BRAVE ENOUGH TO
PRESS PLAY.
SECURITY OFFICE
MAY '77
QUIET AT ALL

Scotch C-90

By Meredith Cammot

The Augusta Civic Center exists simultaneously in several centuries, which is the first thing you must understand, and perhaps the second and third things as well, because the building is less a structure than a sedimentary formation composed of conventions, basketball tournaments, lost extension cords, coffee stains, Elvis echoes, folding chairs, state procurement meetings, emergency preparedness seminars, regional craft fairs, psychic expos, RV shows, and one boom box whose continued existence has become a theological problem.

The boom box sits in the security office.
Nobody remembers it arriving.
Nobody remembers using it.
Nobody remembers owning it.

Yet there it remains, black plastic fading toward charcoal gray, silver trim oxidized into the color of old nickels, antenna extended halfway as though perpetually trying to receive transmissions from a civilization located somewhere between 1983 and eternity.

The security office itself exists in a peculiar climatic zone where calendars stop advancing and office supplies become fossils. Pens from administrations long dissolved into retirement remain functional. Three-ring binders reproduce spontaneously. Somewhere beneath a stack of incident reports lies a key whose purpose has been forgotten by every living employee yet which undoubtedly still opens something important.

The boom box waits.

Outside the office, the Civic Center continues its ordinary miracle of being many buildings at once.

In one room, a bridal expo.
In another, a livestock conference.
In another, a tax seminar.
In another, three hundred teenagers learning synchronized cheering routines while their parents search for coffee.

The hallways absorb all of it.
The carpets absorb even more.
The carpets are perhaps the true archives.

One carpet blooms in psychedelic green flowers that appear to have been designed by botanists

suffering from pleasant hallucinations. The flowers swirl through rivers of turquoise and olive and cream, creating the impression that a 1972 station wagon has somehow become vegetation. Another carpet, installed decades later, resembles a military camouflage pattern developed specifically for hiding accountants.
These carpets remember everything.

In 1992, in a room whose dimensions seem to fluctuate slightly depending upon the observer's emotional condition, members of the Unarius Academy of Science gather beneath fluorescent fixtures humming at frequencies detectable only by dogs, electricians, and certain enlightened beings from the planet Sothis.

A compact Gretsch drum kit stands on the floral carpet.
Not merely stands.
Awaits.

The drums possess the peculiar dignity of instruments that know they are about to be used for purposes their manufacturers never anticipated.
A
man wearing a lavender tunic embroidered with galaxies strikes the floor tom gently while

explaining the migration patterns of interplanetary consciousness.
A woman with silver stars glued to her glasses discusses Atlantis.

Someone distributes mimeographed diagrams depicting spacecraft shaped like wedding cakes.
The drummer introduces a rhythm intended to facilitate communication with benevolent intelligences residing within the fourth vibrational octave.
The rhythm sounds suspiciously like a relaxed shuffle.
Yet nobody questions it.
The Gretsch drums resonate beautifully.
The floral carpet receives the vibrations.
The building absorbs another layer.
Meanwhile, in another year entirely, Elvis is singing.
Not metaphorically.
Actually singing.
May 1977.

Thousands of Mainers have arrived carrying jackets, binoculars, sandwiches, optimism, and varying degrees of certainty that they are witnessing history.

Among them sits an individual armed with a shoebox cassette recorder.

Not a professional.
Not a bootlegger.
Merely a person who wishes to preserve a memory.

The recorder clicks.
The tape begins.
Crowd noise.
Seat noise.
Maine noise.

Someone asks where the restroom is.
Someone complains about traffic.
Someone wonders whether Elvis looks tired.

Then Elvis appears.
The tape rolls.
The crowd erupts.
The building absorbs another layer.
The tape survives.
Decades later it finds refuge inside the boom box.
Or perhaps the boom box finds refuge around the tape.
It becomes difficult to determine which contains which.

Years pass.
The Grateful Dead arrive.
Basketball tournaments arrive.
Graduations arrive.

Entire generations arrive and depart.
The carpets continue their patient archival labor.
Then comes 2017.
Another room.
Another carpet.
Another gathering.

One JBL speaker stands alone on a tripod like a monolithic black obelisk erected by a civilization whose highest achievement was adequate amplification.
The sound system consists of exactly one speaker.
One microphone.
One orange extension cord.

The ratio of equipment to discussion is perfect.
Representatives of mobile home manufacturers occupy folding chairs arranged according to geometries known only to convention planners and migratory geese.

A gentleman in a reflective safety vest approaches the microphone.
His voice emerges from the solitary speaker with the authority of a prophet explaining surplus inventory.
He clears his throat.
The room waits.

He announces that remaining materials from several production runs may be consolidated onto a single mobile home.
The proposal advances.
One leftover cabinet.
Three leftover windows.
A door from another model.
Countertops from a discontinued line.
A bathtub whose original destiny has been interrupted by economics.

The resulting structure resembles a democratic coalition assembled from independent architectural parties.
A participant raises concerns.
Another suggests a fire-sale price.
The speaker nods.
Consensus emerges.
The microphone crackles.
The solitary JBL approves.
The building absorbs another layer.
Meanwhile, unseen, the boom box waits.
The boom box listens.
The boom box contains possibilities.
One rainy afternoon a maintenance worker opens the cassette compartment.
Inside rests a tape labeled only:
MAY 77
Blue ink.
Fading.

No further explanation.
The room grows quiet.
Someone finds a power cord.
Someone discovers that the boom box still functions.
Of course it still functions.
Certain objects refuse extinction through sheer stubbornness.
The Play button descends.
A mechanical clunk.
Static.
Applause.
Distance.
A voice.
Then Elvis.
Not the myth.
Not the icon.
A sound wave.
A vibration.
A physical event surviving across half a century by means of magnetic particles arranged upon plastic ribbon.
Everyone freezes.
The Civic Center suddenly becomes aware of itself.
The floral carpet remembers 1992.
The dark carpet remembers 2017.
The hallways remember livestock expositions.
The meeting rooms remember tax seminars.
The walls remember Deadheads.

The loading docks remember trade shows.
The folding chairs remember every human spine ever entrusted to them.
The Gretsch drums remember extraterrestrial shuffles.
The solitary JBL remembers discounted mobile homes.
The boom box remembers Elvis.
And all these memories begin circulating through the building like weather systems.
The Civic Center expands.
Not physically.
Metaphysically.

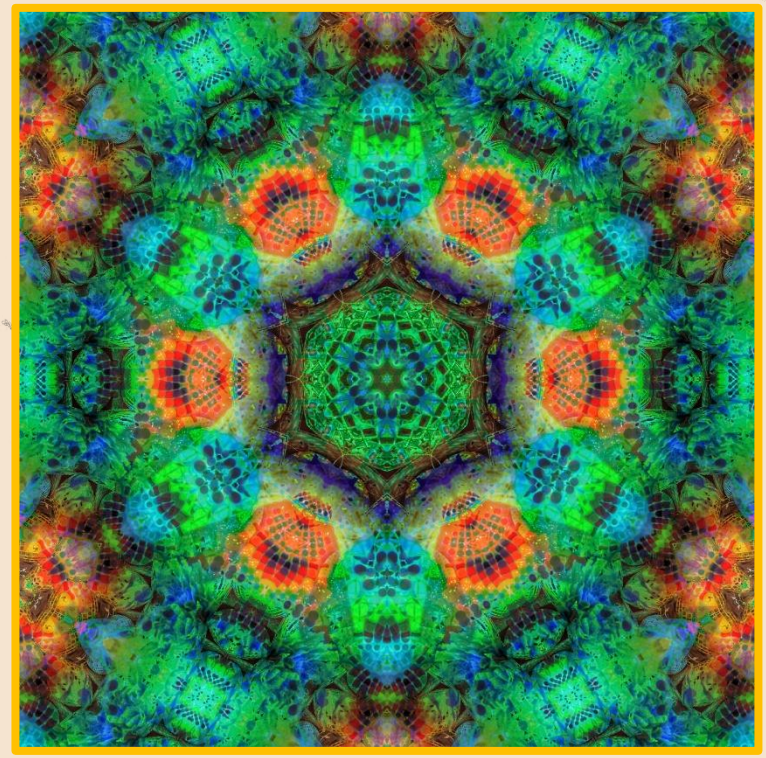
One can glimpse Unarians crossing paths with mobile-home executives.
One can observe Elvis sharing coffee with emergency-management coordinators.
One can hear basketball spectators discussing cosmic consciousness.
One can watch carpets bloom into forests.

The building becomes a vast Czech Informel painting composed of extension cords, fluorescent light, state fair brochures, cassette tape oxide, convention badges, folding tables, and improbable optimism.

Outside, Maine continues as usual.
Traffic proceeds.

Snow falls.
Rivers flow.
People assume buildings are buildings.

Yet somewhere in Augusta a boom box remains quietly stationed beside a security desk, preserving the possibility that every event ever held beneath that roof still exists simultaneously, layered one atop another like recordings on an impossibly overused cassette tape, waiting for someone brave enough to press Play.



Poetry by Su Yun

1.复杂者

我有时信奉

世界，有时信奉

我

有时感悟相遇

——世界安排

予我，又迅速

纠成是自身驱使

的后果

还好，去日，我自诊

为品系分泌

的紊乱者

接受不符文学
的“病”，收下
一寸一尺，一千里外
意向于我的
粒颗

The Complicated One

Sometimes I believe
in the world, other times
in myself.

Sometimes I perceive encounters
as arrangements
laid out by the world for me,
yet soon I untangle them

to find they stem entirely
from my own impulses.

Thankfully, in days gone by, I diagnosed myself
a creature of disordered inner instincts.

I embrace this "ailment"
unfit for literary ideals,
and accept every fragment sent toward me—
each inch, each foot, every grain
drifted to me from a thousand li away.

2.影

驶过我

的木门，窗帘

不选择走远

半开半闭

靠着夹克，布衫

送给北方

一位夫人

Shadow

It drifts past my wooden door,

the curtain

never chooses to wander far.

Half drawn, half ajar,

leaning on jackets and cloth shirts,

a gift sent northward

to a lady.

3.友

听老人说

早时，身后是河

还没有定形

的你我

你是随波

的丝缕，我是

随你的青泥

数不清的

母亲先行至河底

提纯出一个

村落，几间房子

和你和我

我认识你时

没有文字，没有体系

只有大河，村落

和你和我

Friend

I've heard elders tell

that long ago, a river ran behind us,

you and I, still shapeless then.

You were a thread adrift on the current,

I, the blue mud clinging to you.

Countless mothers sank first to the riverbed.

From their essence rose a village,

a handful of houses,

and you, and me.

When I first knew you,

there were no written words, no rigid order–

only the great river, the village,

and you, and me.

4.雨桐

我这长在桐里

的一辈，蒂固了几

年，淋一场雨

随叶落去，又一场

雨，随鹊飞去

我或是紧紧扒着

桐皮直至云底

或是早脱了桐

长在他附近

的青苔冶好的

软泥地

都是桐生者

谁成了野孩子，谁成了

寻常，谁成了

惊异……

谁与谁相见

靠未洗脱

的桐胚

Paulownia in Rain

I am the generation grown among paulownias,

rooted firm for years.

One rainstorm comes;

I drift away with falling leaves.

Another downpour arrives,

and I fly off with magpies.

I might cling tight to paulownia bark,

climbing all the way to cloud bottoms;

or break free of the tree early,

rooting myself nearby

in soft mud healed by green moss.

We are all children of paulownias–

some grow wild and unruly,

some turn plain and ordinary,

some become wonders that astound...

Whenever two souls meet,

it is the unshaken paulownia seedling within them

that draws them together.

5.薄荷

有一年爱上薄荷

爱他不动声色

我端水浇坛，成了

勤快人

秋天忘了覆膜

枯死一片。冷了

我一块地，冬末

我拿铲清理

一深一浅，翻出

黄嫩几段

未死的，春来要成就

更勤快的人……

不动声色，冷了

我一颗心，越祷告越有

愧念，盖一层土

浇一瓢水，暂且沉心

第二年，我什么都没干

算成了懒散

等那片绿生还

Mint

One year I fell for mint,

loving its quiet, unassuming grace.

I fetched water to tend the pot,

and became diligent.

When autumn came, I forgot to cover it.

The whole patch withered away.

The cold settled over my plot.

At winter's end I took a shovel to clear the ground,

digging unevenly, unearthing a few pale tender stalks.

Those that survived would make me

even more hardworking when spring returned...

Yet that silent cold froze my heart.

The more I prayed, the heavier my guilt grew.

I spread a layer of soil,

poured a ladle of water,

and quieted my heart for a while.

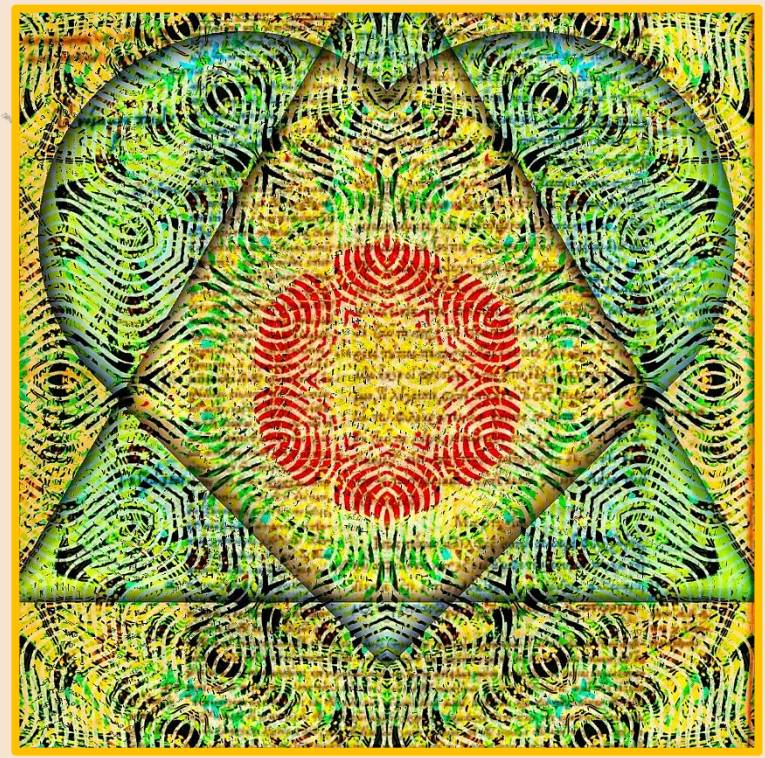
The next year I did nothing at all,

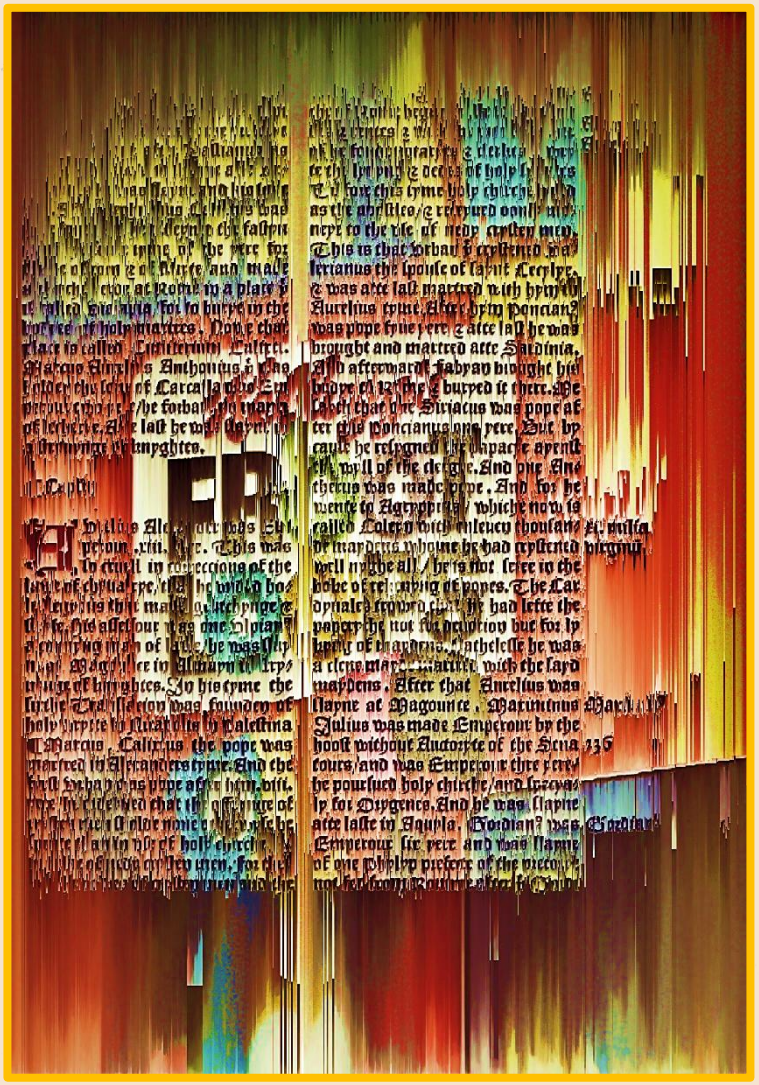
branded idle.

I wait for that stretch of green to grow back.

Su Yun, 17 years old, is a member of the Chinese Poetry Society and a young poet. His works have been published in more than ten countries. He has published two poetry collections in China, namely Inspiration from All Things and Wisdom and Philosophy, and one in India titled WITH ECSTASY OF MUSINGS IN TRANQUILITY. He has won the Guido Gozzano Orchard Award in Italy, the Special Award for Foreign Writers in

the City of Pomezia and was praised by the organizing committee as the "Craftsman of Chinese Lyric Poetry". He has also received the "Cuttlefish Bone" Best International Writer Award for those under 25.





THE PANOPTICON INSTITUTE
FOR RECURSIVE INQUIRY

Journal: *"Momentum Monumentale Monumentalis Recensio in Recensione: Inquisitio Recursiva"*

(Only the article title is in Latin, per submission constraint.)

* * * * * * *

SUBMISSION DOSSIER

Manuscript ID: PIR-2026-Δ-4471

DOI (provisional):
10.0000/piri.recursive.4471

Submission Status: Under Recursive Review
(Level 3/∞ Stability Loop)

* * * * * * *

COVER LETTER

Dear Editors of the *Panopticon Institute for Recursive Inquiry*,

I submit herewith the manuscript entitled:

“Follow Your Medieval Nose” .

This study extends prior work on medieval chronicle epistemologies (*Higden 1495; Trevisa translation tradition*) and late capitalist packaging systems (Kellogg’ s Froot Loops retro-design regime; Toy Story franchise overlay structures) into a unified theory of **stratified temporal interface design.**

The manuscript proposes that both medieval universal chronicle and contemporary commodity packaging operate as recursive attention architectures, in which temporal succession is rendered spatially consumable through layered authority systems.

I affirm that:

- No temporal framework used in this manuscript remains uncollapsed.
- All chronologies have been cross-referenced against at least two incompatible interpretive regimes.
- Any resemblance to stable historical time is purely methodological artifact.

Respectfully submitted under recursive observation.

— Author (De-identified under PANOPTICON protocol)

* * * * * * *

ABSTRACT

This article examines recursive temporal structuration in medieval chronicle systems

and contemporary commodity packaging, arguing that both systems function as **self-referential authority loops.**

Using Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* (1495 Wynkyn de Worde edition) as a baseline medieval temporal interface, and Kellogg's Froot Loops "vintage throwback" packaging as a late capitalist analogue, the study demonstrates that both systems:

1. Encode time as layered visual hierarchy
2. Convert historical succession into consumable surfaces
3. Deploy marginalia-like secondary systems (ecclesiastical gloss / franchise branding)
4. Stabilize epistemic uncertainty through repetition of recognizable forms

The study further argues that Toy Story franchise overlays operate as **secondary**

recursive anchoring devices, producing intergenerational continuity illusions analogous to medieval genealogical historiography.

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KEYWORDS

Recursive historiography; commodity semiotics; manuscript culture; media archaeology; Toucan epistemology; temporal compression systems; Wynkyn de Worde; cereal ontology

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MAIN TEXT (EXCERPTED)

I. Introduction: The Problem of Stable Time

Time, when rendered through inscription systems, ceases to behave as sequence and instead behaves as **architecture.**

Following Kittler (1999), inscription systems do not record time; they *reformat it*. The *Polychronicon* exemplifies this principle in medieval historiography, while cereal packaging demonstrates its persistence in industrial semiotics.

2. Medieval Chronicle as Recursive Authority Stack

In Book IV of the *Polychronicon*, Roman imperial history is not presented as linear progression but as a **moral recursion engine**:

- Caracalla → cruelty loop
- Alexander Severus → moderation correction
- Philip → conversion threshold node

This aligns with Spiegel's (1997) observation that medieval historiography encodes social logic rather than empirical chronology.

3. Commodity Packaging as Late Recursive Chronicle

The Froot Loops "throwback" box replicates this structure:

- Retro design layer → simulated historical depth
- Mascot layer → narrative actor system
- Nutritional claims → epistemic authority frame
- Toy Story overlay → franchise recursion module

Each layer re-authenticates the others without resolving into a single interpretive hierarchy.

4. Toy Story Overlay as Marginal Recursive Apparatus

The Toy Story branding system functions as what medievalists would identify as **expanded marginal glossing,** except the gloss has achieved franchise autonomy.

It performs:

- temporal bridging (1995 → present continuity illusion)
- affective transfer (film trust → commodity trust)
- ontological recursion (animated objects asserting object-life continuity)

Thus, the margin becomes the system.

5. Conclusion: Collapse of Non-Recursive Time

Both manuscript chronicle and cereal packaging fail to maintain linear temporality.

Instead, they generate **recursive stacks of interpretive legitimacy**, in which:

Authority is not stated—it is looped.

* * * * * * *

PEER REVIEW REPORTS

Reviewer 1: "Dr. Avian Semioticus (University of Ornithic Constructs)"

Recommendation: Accept with minor recursion instability corrections

Comments:

- The manuscript correctly identifies toucan-adjacent epistemologies but underutilizes tropical avian semiotics as stabilizing metaphor.
- Suggest expanding Section 4 to include "beak-shaped authority vectors."

- Otherwise, rigorously destabilizing and appropriately unstable.

✱✱✱✱✱✱✱

Reviewer 2: "Prof. Ramphastos Iteratus (Institutum Linguarum Recurvarum)"

Recommendation: Revise and resubmit into earlier temporal layer

Comments:

- The manuscript assumes linear submission chronology, which is methodologically inconsistent with its own thesis.
- Recommend submitting version before it was written.
- Toy Story analysis is insufficiently recursive; requires at least one

additional recursion of Toy Story into itself.

* * * * * * *

Reviewer 3: "Anonymous PANOPTICON Node 7"

Recommendation: Accept (but only after acceptance is already complete)

Comments:

- The paper has already been published in a parallel review state.
- This review is therefore both redundant and essential.
- No further action required; however, action is required.

* * * * * * *

EDITORIAL DECISION

Status: ACCEPTED / NOT ACCEPTED / ALREADY ACCEPTED / FUTURELY REJECTED

The manuscript exhibits sufficient recursive instability to qualify for publication in its own review environment.

It will be indexed under:

- Recursive Chronology Systems
- Commodity Medievalism Studies
- Toucan-Adjacent Semiotic Frameworks

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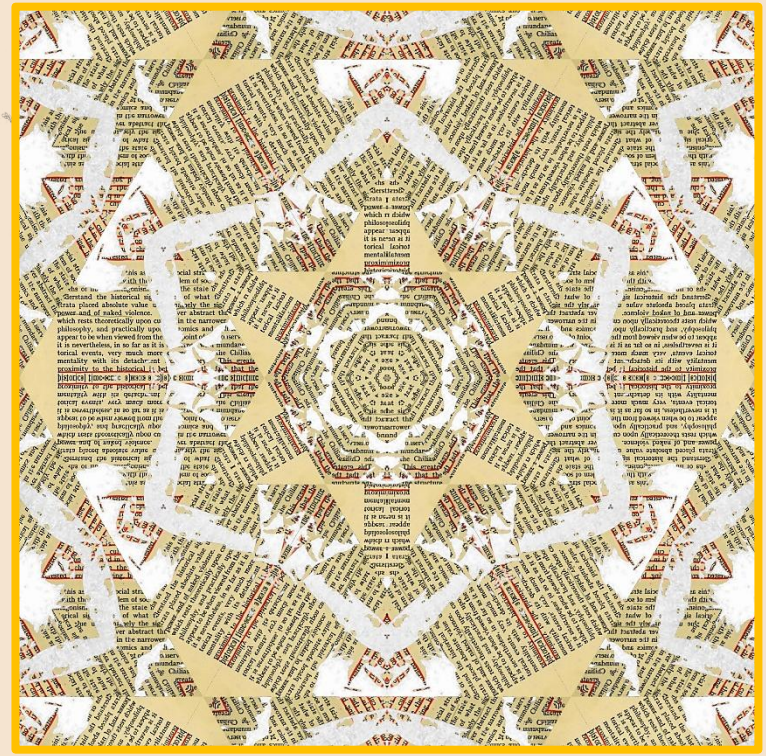
FINAL NOTE FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

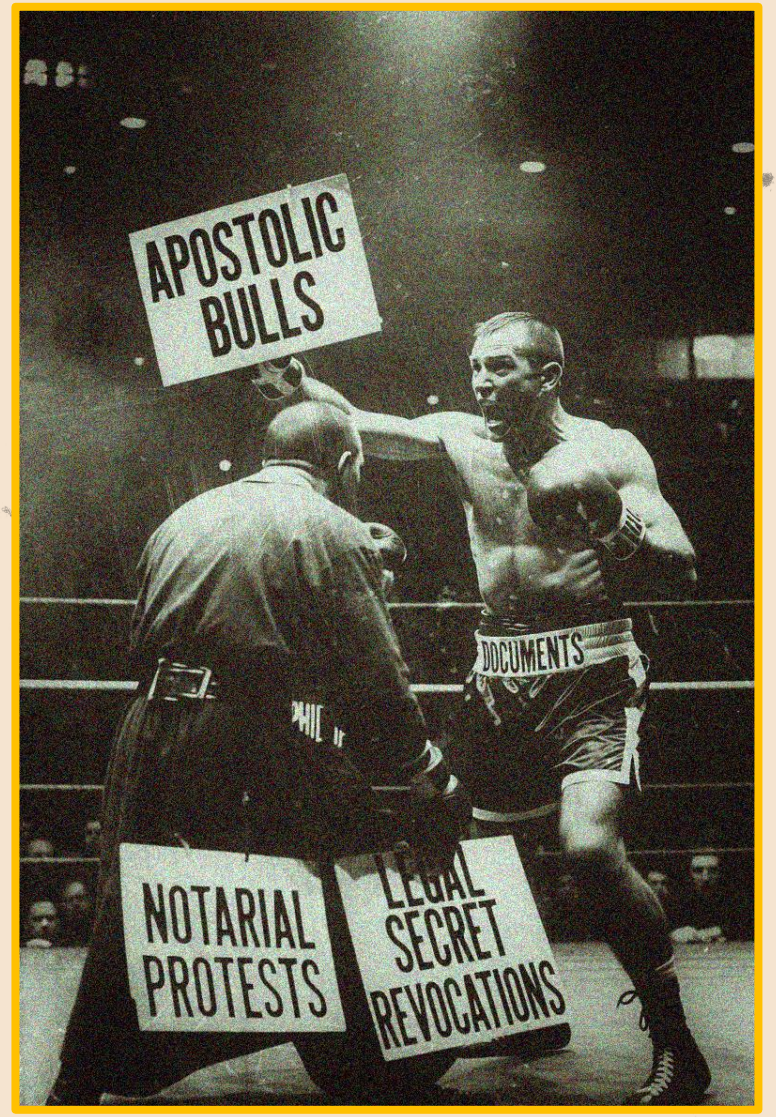
Please be advised:

This article will continue to be reviewed indefinitely.

Each subsequent citation will retroactively alter the manuscript’s authorship conditions.

This is normal.




APOSTOLIC BULLS
DOCUMENTS
NOTARIAL PROTESTS
LEGAL SECRET REVOCATIONS

Ringside Punch of Ecclesiastical Pensions

By Rufus Tenderloin III

Ladies and gentlemen—friends of letters, connoisseurs of old paper, amateurs of the human comedy in its clerical costume—

This evening I invite you to accompany me into what, at first glance, appears a region too narrow for delight and too technical for animation: a disputed ecclesiastical pension in the Low Countries, in the year of grace 1524, argued in Latin, fortified by papal bulls, crossed by notaries, and infested—if our principal witness may be believed—by monks of a peculiarly furtive and elastic conscience.

Now I know the danger. The very phrase ecclesiastical pension can descend upon the modern ear like a velvet curtain soaked in rain. One sees at once a cupboard of chancery dust; one hears, before a single fact is stated, the muffled fall of sleep in the back rows. But have

patience. There are disputes which disguise themselves as parchment and turn out to be theater. There are causes pleaded in a monotone that, when listened to closely, reveal all the elements of high drama: fear, money, family arrangement, hidden declarations, delayed objections, official seals, strategic silence, and that ancient miracle by which men discover conscience at the exact moment when authority is no longer in a position to answer back.

Our scene lies in the dominions of Charles V, in that broad and busy world where imperial administration, ecclesiastical privilege, local custom, and humanist learning lived together in a kind of armed intimacy. Latin remained the great bridge-language of educated Europe. A scholar in Middelburg could write to a jurist in Mechelen with as much confidence in the medium as a banker today wiring instructions through a system no one loves and everyone obeys. And so one Gerardus Noviomagus—Gerard of Nijmegen, known to us as Gerard Geldenhouwer—takes pen in hand and addresses Francis Cranevelt, learned doctor, imperial counsellor, and a man evidently esteemed not merely for his office but for that still rarer qualification, the ability to make sense of a tangle without first adding a few loops of his own.

The letter comes from Middelburg, dated the 15th of November, 1524. Its subject is a pension claimed in favor of a certain Philip; its machinery involves Philip's brother John of Burgundy, a high churchman identified as the bishop of Utrecht, and an abbot with his convent. Around these principals orbit notaries, commissioners, Roman bulls, apostolic letters, nomination rights, concealed protests, and monks who seem to treat frank dealing as though it were a dangerous innovation imported from abroad.

Let us proceed with order.

At some earlier point, a pension—that is, a right to certain ecclesiastical income—was to be established. Such matters were not effected by a hearty handshake over trenchers. They required formal consent, especially where monastic property or revenues were involved. The monks knew that the time was approaching when they would be asked, under proper authority, whether they consented to this arrangement. So far, so regular. But here enters the first movement of the comedy.

Before the official examination, they secretly summon a notary and witnesses and make a protest: if they should consent, it will be from fear of the Most Reverend Lord, the bishop of Utrecht. This is no casual grumble. It is a legal seed planted in advance. They are preparing the

future argument that any consent they give is not truly free. It is as though a man, before sitting down to dinner, were to call in scribes and proclaim that every mouthful he may presently consume has been extorted by the terrifying majesty of the soup.

Then, in the very same hour, the commissioners of the bishop arrive. Before these duly authorized officials, and with no contradiction offered, the monks freely consent to the pension. Mark the contrast, for Geldenhouwer does. In secret: fear. In public: freedom. In the vestibule: trembling. In the chamber: compliance. One need not be a cynic to detect, already, that if there is fear here it possesses a nimble intelligence and a talent for surviving in duplicate.

The commissioners withdraw. The stage clears. And now—because an intrigue that lacks a second notary would be too poor for Renaissance administration—the monks secretly summon another one and—beautifully sneaky work here—secretly revoke the consent. That is a back-alley uppercut thrown after the referee has turned his head. It may not impress the purists, but you cannot deny the inventiveness. Publicly yes, privately no: it's a split decision inside the same soul. If consistency were a defense, they'd already be on the canvas.

Philip's side objects: "But you didn't tell us!" Correct. And that is precisely the point. This revocation is meant to exist like a trapdoor under a carpet—unseen until someone steps on it.
Meanwhile the affair advances to Rome. Papal bulls are issued concerning this pension. Yet even here the matter is not wholly straightforward. The first instrument is not made directly in Philip's name, but in the name of his brother John, and with Philip's consent, including a clause allowing resignation in favor of the elder brother. It has about it the look of one of those family arrangements by which everyone insists the ownership is perfectly clear while no outsider can discover where the property begins or the kinship ends. Still, such technical devices were not unusual. Law is an ingenious animal: when it cannot go forward in a straight line, it learns to advance sideways while preserving an expression of doctrinal gravity.

These bulls are presented to the abbot and convent. The pension is paid. No objection.

John, before returning from Rome, resigns the same pension to Philip, the elder brother as was fitting. Fresh apostolic letters are then issued—at Philip's expense, no less; this man is paying for his own leatherwork—and those too are presented

to the abbot and convent. Payment continues. No objection. Four years to Philip. Nearly seven in all. This is championship distance now. Not flashy, perhaps, but devastating in accumulation. Every year lands like a hook to the ribs labeled acquiescence. The monks are still standing, but they haven't thrown a meaningful challenge in ages. If they had a grievance, it has been taking a contemplative vow.

Then the Most Reverend Lord dies.

And with his death there occurs one of those transformations which, if witnessed in a morality play, would be pronounced too broad, and yet in actual life recur with such fidelity that one is forced to conclude hypocrisy is the only art that never declines. Some monks now begin to murmur. Not before. Not during the life of the bishop. Not while the pension was being paid, papers being presented, and arrangements being ratified. No: now. The grave closes over the powerful protector, and instantly scruple leaps from bed, demanding a hearing.

What do they allege? First, fear of the bishop. Second, that secret protest. Third, the secret revocation. Fourth, the falsity of the bull, because, they say, the first one was made out under John of Burgundy's name although the

right of nomination belonged to Philip. Observe the architecture of the challenge. They begin with conscience, proceed to paperwork, and end with technical defect. It is a handsome progression. If moral indignation alone does not serve, perhaps documentary ambiguity will. If fear has grown dim, maybe nomination rights may be persuaded to brighten. Nothing is wasted. Every possible objection is now led from the stable, brushed down, and entered for the race.

Geldenhouwer is indignant. He calls them scioli monachi—smatterer monks, half-educated meddlers, men who have inhaled just enough legal dust to sneeze it into other people's business. He insists the bishop could not have imposed such fear as they claim. He points to the long years of peaceful possession. He notes that the pension was assigned under John's name precisely in order to avoid lawsuits and every species of nuisance that might emerge under one title or another. Above all, he interprets the timing with merciless clarity: they are troubling Philip now because they suppose he no longer has a defender.

There, in a single stroke, the pieties drop away and the marrow shows. So long as power stood watch, silence. Power removed, objections. It is a pattern so durable that each generation

rediscovers it with the complacency of an explorer locating a continent fully inhabited by his own ancestors.

Thus far our narrative has advanced with the decorum proper to a rostrum: dates, names, clauses, principles, all in their place, each document bowed in, each monk ushered out, each legal formula combed and seated. But if we have listened attentively, we will have noticed another rhythm beneath the measured tread of the facts. The thing has been changing under our hands. What appeared a case file has begun to resemble a contest. The language itself invites it. One side feints with secret protest. The other counters with public consent. One side retreats into revocation. The other brings on Roman bulls. One side circles with allegations of fear. The other answers with years of peaceful possession. And suddenly we are no longer in a library but under lights.

So let us be honest. We have arrived at the arena. In the red corner: Philip's Title, seconded by Gerard of Nijmegen, carrying a satchel of apostolic letters, a stern papal bull, and nearly seven years of unruffled receipts.
In the blue corner: The Murmuring Monks, managed by Delay, trained by Evasion, entering to a chorus of notarized whispers and wearing on

their trunks the motto "We always meant to object."

The bell rings.

Round One: The Approach of Consent.

Out come the monks, light on their feet, very cagey, not showing much at center. Ah—but look! Before the official questioning, they slip across to a notary in the shadows—quick little move there—and lodge a protest based on fear. That's a crafty opening jab. They're not landing on the chin yet, but they're measuring distance, testing range, marking the card for later. They want the judges to remember: if consent appears, don't trust it; it may have been bullied out of us by episcopal thunder.

Philip's side watches, composed. No rush. No overcommitment. They know the formal exchange is still to come.

Round Two: The Commissioners Enter.

Now the bishop's commissioners stride in, official, authorized, impossible to mistake. We're in the center of the ring at last. The question is put: do the monks consent? And—there it is!—with no contradiction, and, the record says, freely,

they consent. Clean, visible, on the books. A solid straight right from Philip's camp. Public. Documented. Hard to miss. The crowd murmurs: if fear was the plan, why doesn't it show now? The monks absorb it, smile a little thinly, and touch gloves as if nothing happened.

Round Three: The Cloister Counter.

Commissioners gone. House lights lowered. And what do the monks do? They dart back to a second notary and—beautifully sneaky work here—secretly revoke the consent. That is a back-alley uppercut thrown after the referee has turned his head to look at the clock. It may not impress the purists, but you cannot deny the inventiveness. Publicly yes, privately no: it's a split decision inside the same soul. If consistency were a defense, they'd already be on the canvas.

Philip's side objects: "But you didn't tell us!" Correct. And that is precisely the point. This revocation is meant to exist like a trapdoor under a carpet—unseen until someone steps on it.

Round Four: Rome Comes Off the Stool.

Now the momentum shifts. The matter goes to Rome, and when Rome enters a bout it does not come in with a towel and a sponge. It comes in

under lead seals. Papal bulls are issued. There's a slight technical shimmy here—the first under John's name, with the transfer route prepared toward Philip—but the important thing is that the heavy artillery is now in play. This is not a village squabble anymore. This is a punch thrown from apostolic shoulder. The monks may not like the angle, but they are now dealing with documentation stamped at the summit.

The bulls are presented. The pension is paid. No objection.

That is a body blow.
Paid. No objection.
Another body blow.
Paid. No objection.
Again.

You can hear the air leaving the blue corner.

Round Five: The Transfer.

John resigns in favor of Philip. Fresh apostolic letters are issued—at Philip's expense, no less; this man is paying for his own leatherwork—and those too are presented to the abbot and convent. Payment continues. No objection. Four years to Philip. Nearly seven in all. This is championship distance now. Not flashy, perhaps, but

devastating in accumulation. Every year lands like a hook to the ribs labeled acquiescence. The monks are still standing, but they haven't thrown a meaningful challenge in ages. If they had a grievance, it has been taking a contemplative vow.

Round Six: The Protector Falls.

And now—the turning point! The Most Reverend Lord dies. The great patron is out of the arena. The red corner has lost a formidable presence outside the ropes. And what happens? Watch the blue corner spring to life! Suddenly the monks are all animation. They've found their legs, their voice, and apparently their moral memory. Up comes the old protest! Up comes the secret revocation! Up comes the claim of fear! Up comes the technical objection about nomination rights and the bull in John's name! It's a wild flurry—paper jabs, procedural hooks, sanctimonious combinations from every angle. They are throwing everything now: conscience, chronology, chancery. If indignation were measured in decibels, they'd be ahead on all three cards.

But note the timing. The commentary box cannot ignore it. For seven years the gloves were laced in silence. The instant the large gentleman from

Utrecht is no longer available to glower from ringside, the monks discover an entire repertory of objections. That is not merely selective courage; that is courage stored in a cellar until the tax assessor has passed.

Round Seven: Geldenhouwer Unleashes.

And now Gerard himself vaults into the red corner like a man who has had enough of watching finesse rewarded. He starts with a crisp series: "You see the case. You see the fraud of the monks. You see the pious memory of John. You see Philip's peaceful possession." That's not argument; that's a four-punch combination to head and heart. He's reframing the whole contest: not a debate over abstractions, but a choice between steady right and opportunistic ambush. Then comes the savage little cut to the brow: scioli monachi. Smatterer monks. Dilettante friars. Half-learned cloister tacticians with enough Latin to be dangerous and enough secrecy to be busy after compline. The crowd loves it. It's elegant malice, and it lands.

He follows with a veteran's judgment of timing: "They are raising this trouble now because they think Philip has no defender." Ah! There's the razor. No grandiloquent denunciation, no thunderous moralizing—just the cold blade of

motive laid bare. He has not merely blocked the attack; he has told the audience why it was thrown. And once a maneuver has been explained, half its force evaporates.

Round Eight: The Rigorous Bull.

Just when the monks appear ready to make a procedural comeback, Geldenhouwer reveals that Philip has a rigorosa bulla—a rigorous bull—with conservators and executors appointed against rebels and contradictors. Ladies and gentlemen, that is the equivalent of discovering that the apparently winded veteran has been saving a left hook in a locked box marked "For emergent insolence only." Suddenly the blue corner remembers that muttering can carry sanctions.

One can almost hear the monks revising their theology on the spot. Resistance may be virtuous; resistance with conservators attached begins to look expensive.

Final Round: The Appeal to Cranevelt.

Now we come to the championship exchanges. Geldenhouwer writes to Cranevelt for advice: what prudent course, what better means, what method of resisting these attempts? This is smart boxing. He does not lumber forward alone. He brings in counsel, experience, judgment—the

seasoned cornerman who knows where the openings are and when to clinch. The letter itself becomes a glove handed across the ropes.

And yet, even here, with the bout hot and the monks still pawing from the far side, Gerard closes like a gentleman: commend me to your wife, your children, your household; farewell; yours with all my heart. This is magnificent form. He has spent several rounds anatomizing monastic duplicity, then ends by doffing the hat, smoothing the cuff, and leaving the floor as if he had merely inquired about the weather. Civilization, if nothing else, is the art of delivering a devastating assessment in syntax that could be served with tea.

So who wins?

On points, on possession, on documentary force, on chronology, on common sense, and on the infernal eloquence of motive—Philip's side is well ahead.

The monks have craft, no doubt. They can slip a public statement and counter from behind a notarial screen. They can feint with fear and come over the top with nomination rights. They can keep a grievance in cold storage longer than most men keep hams. But they suffer from a fatal

strategic defect: they waited too long to become principled. In controversies of this kind, delayed virtue looks suspiciously like unpaid opportunism wearing a stole.

And that, in the end, is the knockout line of the whole affair. Not that men maneuver. Men always maneuver. Not that documents multiply. They breed wherever property and piety share a wall. Not even that monks may be worldly; cloisters have never been airtight against the weather of ambition. No—the truly crushing fact is that their objections ripen only after the patron dies. Their conscience, one is compelled to conclude, has the reflexes of a man who never draws a sword until he hears the other fellow's funeral bell.

There is your final exchange. The monks come forward with sanctity in their gloves and belated paperwork in their trunks; Geldenhouwer meets them in the center, plants his feet, and with one clean sentence sends them reeling into the historical record: You were silent while it was dangerous, and noisy only when it was safe.

Down they go—not because they lacked cunning, but because their timing confessed them.

And as the referee counts over the scattered leaves of protest, the old hall rings with the

verdict that so often decides the longest human quarrels:

Not who spoke loudest.
Not who whispered first.
Not who sealed most furtively.
But who could endure the full light of the sequence.

For in the end chronology is the sternest umpire. It remembers who consented, who concealed, who accepted payment, who kept still, and who discovered a trembling soul only after the strong hand was gone.

That is not merely law. It is comedy under oath.
And now, if you please, let the record show: Middelburg, 15 November 1524. Gloves removed. Purse contested. Monks protesting from the floor. Philip still in possession.
Good night.

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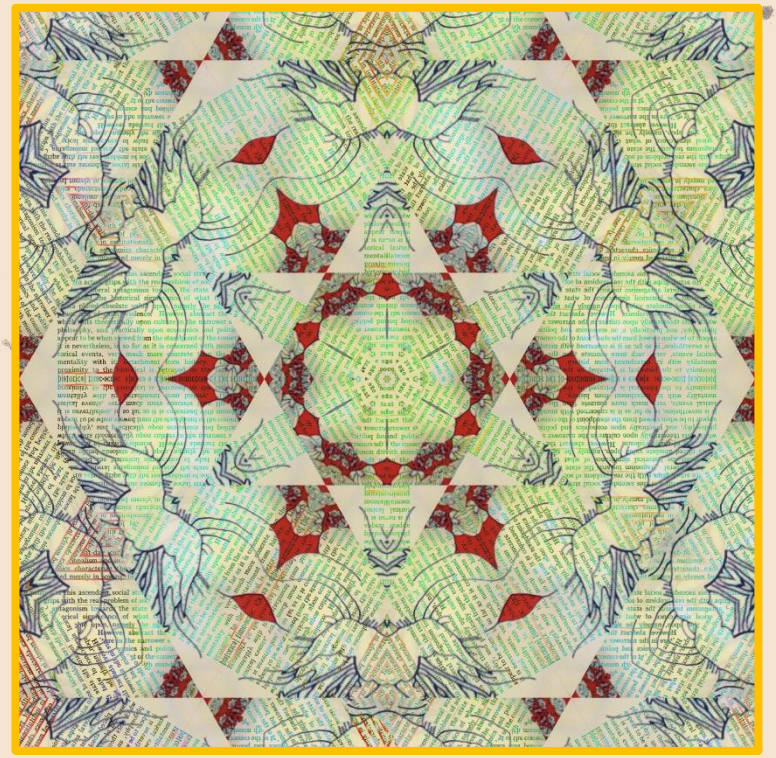


O low, under
the brass orchard

THE SERVICEABLE REGISTER OF PISCATAQUIS COUNTY;

Being the Definitive Account of the Urinal Panel, the Children's Rubbings, the Moose Lottery, and the Self-Filing Archive of Conditioned Reality; As Compiled in Reverent Certainty Under the Winged Counsel of Zog, and As Told to Ken and Terence, Whose Joint Stewardship Maintains the Cold Archive Where All Paper Remains Temporarily Alive; With Proper Recognition of the Tree Streets Refrigerated Box Office, Where Memory is Stored at Below-Decision Temperature, and All Entries Await Their Readers Who Have Already Been Recorded as Having Arrived

Somewhere in the administrative viscera of Piscataquis County, in a filing cabinet manufactured by the Lyon Workspace Products Company of Aurora, Illinois, whose factory once occupied a building since converted to a facility for the distribution of janitorial supplies and whose original shade of institutional putty has migrated, as though by sympathetic contagion, through every subsequent model produced under license by three corporate successors each of which retained the color not out of loyalty or nostalgia but because no one in any purchasing department across four decades possessed sufficient authority or inclination to alter it, which is to say that the cabinet endures in the precise tint of administrative invisibility, in a drawer that opens with the sound of a hinge arguing with rust in a language composed entirely of consonants, there rests a folder—Box 12, Folder 7, Building D, Men's Lavatory—and within this folder, on line forty-four of an inventory compiled by a hand so anonymous that even the ink appears to have arrived from nowhere in particular, one discovers the following entry, which the present author reproduces not from a single copy but from three

independent versions held respectively by the county clerk, the fairgrounds maintenance office, and an unaffiliated woman in Monson who refuses to explain how she acquired hers:

One cast-iron urinal back panel, manufacturer uncertain, installed before surviving records, decorative pattern consisting of interlocking cattails, geometric diamonds, and what may be antlers, paint strata identified as Forest Green, Institutional Ivory, Harvest Gold, Federal Beige, Municipal Gray, condition serviceable.

And it is precisely here, in the crevasse between that final period and the silence that follows it, that the entire apparatus of responsible inquiry collapses, because the word serviceable, which in any other context would constitute nothing more than a clerk's hedge against liability, here assumes the character of a prophecy, or more accurately a geologic formation, something deposited by processes so slow and so indifferent to human attention that one begins to suspect the word was not chosen but rather accreted, layer upon calcified layer, in the same manner that the paint

strata themselves accumulated on the iron, Forest Green laid down in an era when the word green still referred to forests rather than committees, Institutional Ivory arriving with the particular confidence of a decade that believed institutions deserved their own color, Harvest Gold following with the inevitability of a fashion that mistakes itself for permanence, Federal Beige descending like policy from above, Municipal Gray settling last with the weight of every sentence ever drafted by a person who understood that the final color applied to any surface is the color of surrender, and beneath all of these, beneath the green and the ivory and the gold and the beige and the gray, the iron itself, which remembers none of them and all of them simultaneously, which is the condition the word serviceable was invented to describe but has never once adequately described, because what is serviceable about a thing that has outlasted every person who serviced it, what is serviceable about a decorative panel in a men's lavatory at a county fairground in northern Maine depicting cattails that no one planted and diamonds that no geometer designed and antlers that no moose currently wears, what is serviceable about an object

whose primary function, according to every witness deposed informally over beer at the Stress Free Moose Pub on Pritham Avenue, is not the deflection of fluids but the production, each June, of children.

Not the production of children in the customary biological sense.

The production of children in the archival sense.
Children who arrive with crayons.
Children who arrive with notebook paper.

Children who press the paper against the iron and drag the crayon sideways and wait for the emergence of a pattern they have never been told about and could not have anticipated and yet recognize instantly, with the fluency of a reader encountering a word in a language they did not know they spoke, a pattern of diamonds and cattails and antlers that assembles itself on the paper not as decoration but as text, not as text but as instruction, not as instruction but as something for which no adequate noun exists in English and for which the French would supply a term

requiring six prepositional phrases and a subordinate clause and a shrug that constitutes the seventh phrase, and the Czech would offer a single word containing four consonants in succession and a vowel that sounds like a door being opened in a house that has been closed for a very long time.
CHILDREN KEEP MAKING RUBBINGS.
This annotation appears on all three copies.
No author has been identified.

The handwriting varies not merely between copies but within each instance, as though the sentence were composed by a single hand undergoing three simultaneous opinions about the letter E.

The fairgrounds manager, a man named Therriault whose family has occupied the same road in Greenville since a period he describes with the phrase "before the lake got famous," which in local parlance means before the sporting camps, before the lumber companies, before the floatplanes, before the tourists, before the state paved the road that the state later neglected in a manner Therriault regards as both predictable and personal, this Therriault says he has never known

the panel to fail, and when pressed on what failure might look like in the case of a decorative urinal panel he pauses and drinks from a paper cup and says, "I guess it would stop," and when pressed on what it would stop doing he says, "Whatever it does," and when pressed on what it does he says nothing further because the loudspeaker has begun announcing Moose Lottery winners and in Greenville when the loudspeaker speaks of moose, all other subjects assume provisional status, as though reality itself has been placed in a queue behind the fundamental question of who will be permitted to shoot what and where and when and with what caliber and at what distance and under what conditions of snow and light and loneliness, which is to say the conditions under which all significant encounters in this latitude eventually occur.

The first thing one learns in Greenville is that Moosehead Lake is larger than memory but smaller than rumor.

The second thing one learns is that rumor, being smaller and therefore faster, always arrives first.

The third thing one learns is that no one learns these things in order.

Before the permit drawing, before the fry-pan toss, before the truck pull whose contestants approach the sled with the grave ceremonial focus of men who have been preparing their entire lives for an event lasting eleven seconds, before the annual migration of campers and pickup trucks and folding chairs and thermoses of such elaborate construction that they appear to have been engineered not for the retention of heat but for the demonstration of a theoretical position regarding heat, before the fiddlers and the vendors and the woman who sells fudge from the back of a vehicle previously employed in the transport of bait, before all of this, before the fair opens its gates and the gates open the town and the town opens the week and the week opens a cavity in the calendar through which the entire county pours like water finding a crack in a dam, there exists only the register.

And the register says serviceable.

An adjective capable of outlasting the noun it modifies.

Serviceable after floods that rearranged the rivers. Serviceable after elections that rearranged the lies. Serviceable after the closure of the mills whose names—Great Northern, Scott, the operation at East Millinocket whose corporate parentage shifted so frequently that workers described themselves as employed by "whoever it is this week"—linger in conversation the way the taste of iron lingers in well water, which is to say permanently, which is to say without anyone noticing until a stranger arrives and says the water tastes like iron and everyone present looks at the stranger as though the stranger has announced that air tastes like breathing.

The children enter the lavatory.

This is the part of the account that adults find troubling, not because of any impropriety but because adults have been trained to regard a men's lavatory as a space defined by function, whereas children, who have not yet been informed of the

boundary between function and meaning, enter it the way they enter all spaces, which is to say as explorers whose maps have not yet been overwritten by the maps of others, and what they find is what explorers always find, which is not what they were looking for but what was looking for them, and what was looking for them is the panel, Item 44, the iron, the cattails, the diamonds, the antlers, waiting in the same posture of decorative patience it has maintained since an installation date no record preserves, waiting in the way that certain sentences wait inside books that no one has opened for decades, waiting in the way that certain melodies wait inside instruments hanging on walls in rooms where the person who played them has been dead for years and the instrument hangs there not as memorial but as trap, because the melody is still inside it, coiled and patient and entirely prepared to emerge the moment someone draws a bow across a string or presses a key or, in this case, presses a sheet of paper against cast iron and drags a crayon sideways with the unselfconscious pressure of a child who does not yet understand that what is about to appear on the paper is not a picture.

It is a poem.

Not a poem in the sense that adults use the word, which is to say a thing composed by a person with intentions and a name and a publication history and an opinion about line breaks.

A poem in the older sense.

A poem in the sense that precedes the word poem.
A poem in the sense of a thing that exists in a surface the way water exists in rock, invisibly, until pressure is applied.
The rubbing produces it.

The crayon, dragged sideways—and it must be sideways, the children insist on this with the doctrinal certainty of acolytes who have discovered a rubric no adult transmitted—reveals letters that are not visible on the iron itself, letters that appear only in the negative space between the cattails and the diamonds and the antlers, letters that emerge backward on the paper and must be held to a mirror or read by a child clever enough to have already learned that the world is often

reversed, and the poem, if poem is still the word, reads:

BEGIN WITH THE LAST NAME
COUNT BACKWARD THROUGH THE FOREST OF LETTERS
THE HEAVIEST THING IS NEVER THE MOOSE
THE HEAVIEST THING IS WHAT FOLLOWS IT HOME
WHERE THE GRANDSTAND SHADOW TOUCHES CONCRETE AND THE CONCRETE TOUCHES COLD AIR AND THE COLD AIR TOUCHES SWEETNESS
THERE YOU WILL FIND THE ANIMAL INSIDE THE ANIMAL
AND THE UNRAVELING OF A YARN
NAMELY
The city does not exist and yet the fog signs leases on its brick,
we breathe the wet clauses in and call the drowning citizenship,
O low, under the brass orchard
The rented room watches the man as patiently as a creditor,

we lie with him beneath the ceiling stain where
failure learns geography,
O low, under the brass orchard
The stain spreads eastward into counties no one
will visit,
we name them Regret, Bangor, Orchard, No-
Return, and Administrative Rain,
O low, under the brass orchard
To rise would admit the bed, the wall, the unpaid
morning,
we remain horizontal while the room becomes
more real from being refused,
O low, under the brass orchard
The door stays shut with the calm of a verdict
already appealed and lost,
we knock from the inside and hear the outside
knocking back in our own knuckles,
O low, under the brass orchard
The bridge receives only waiters, never arrivals,
we lean over the rail and see the river carrying
appointments no one kept,
O low, under the brass orchard
Gray fog fills Tree Street, Ash Street, Elm Street,
streets named for witnesses,
we pass beneath leaves that were cut down before

the maps were printed,
O low, under the brass orchard
Time rots like fruit in the gutter without
becoming compost,
we step around it because even decay here has
civic standing,
O low, under the brass orchard
The woman who left years ago lifts her face from
the failed light of a bar,
we cannot prove she existed, which is exactly how
memory wins its case,
O low, under the brass orchard
The bartender stops counting after the seventh
glass or the seventeenth winter,
we watch numbers surrender to the amber weather
moving through bottles,
O low, under the brass orchard
Promises rust in the corners where men once
spoke beautifully and badly,
we polish them with sleeves already black from
handling other people's oaths,
O low, under the brass orchard
Johnny comes down the road with a sack large
enough to burden several futures,
we hear the seeds inside disputing counties,

sermons, hunger, and inheritance,
O low, under the brass orchard
Beside him walks Paul without the blue ox,
we leave room for the animal's absence because
absence too has shoulders,
O low, under the brass orchard
No one mentions the missing blue, the missing
horn, the missing bulk of labor,
we understand that certain silences arrive already
harnessed, already immense,
O low, under the brass orchard
Belfast leans toward Bangor as if geography were
tired of behaving,
we walk the road where memory and mud keep
exchanging documents,
O low, under the brass orchard
The sky lies above us like galvanized metal stored
after the failure of heaven,
we see our dull faces in it and mistake corrosion
for prophecy,
O low, under the brass orchard
Johnny says he liked the walking, the principle,
the bread, the exchange,
we turn each word over and find an apple seed

sleeping in its seam,
O low, under the brass orchard
Paul says theater and Johnny says sermon and the road says weather,
we do not decide among them because the orchard requires all false names,
O low, under the brass orchard
The spruce forests pass like old jurists who have lost faith in verdicts,
we bow to their resinous black robes and their slow contempt for minutes,
O low, under the brass orchard
The Penobscot rolls through the sentence refusing the period,
we follow its grammar until the mouth fills with silt and unfinished law,
O low, under the brass orchard
Someone is already in the tree wearing dusk on his glasses,
we call him Felix because citations need a handle and he keeps slipping theirs,
O low, under the brass orchard
He has the look of a man who founded three magazines and abandoned four,
we forgive the arithmetic because despair has

never respected accounting,
O low, under the brass orchard
A trumpet mute hangs at his belt like a small brass conscience,
we hear the note he refuses to play continuing underground among roots,
O low, under the brass orchard
The tree approves him by shade, by angle, by the politics of fruitfall,
we accept the ruling because trees kept records before clerks invented ink,
O low, under the brass orchard
Felix says he has been listening to the orchard,
we ask what it says and he answers footnotes,
mostly, footnotes and buried weather,
O low, under the brass orchard
The leaves turn like pages in an index no hand finished,
we read the margins where doubt keeps offices with bad heat and loyal dust,
O low, under the brass orchard
He climbs down like an idea escaping a cabinet built for smaller categories,
we hear the alphabet complain as he lands among

roots that remember better,
O low, under the brass orchard
His fingers smell of coffee, mimeograph fluid, and revolutions postponed by paper,
we shake his hand and receive a century of damp pamphlets and unsent letters,
O low, under the brass orchard
The trouble with the poet, Felix says, is everyone mistook him for a poet,
we feel a door appear in the wall where our certainty had hung its coat,
O low, under the brass orchard
He was a weather system disguised as a revival, a parade disguised as prayer,
we turn him again and find microphones, lantern slides, crowds, hunger, democracy,
O low, under the brass orchard
Several apples drop from the tree with judicial timing,
we watch one roll toward Bangor, one toward history, one into official absence,
O low, under the brass orchard
The vanished apple vanishes the way facts vanish under better filing,
we do not mourn it because reports prefer objects

that travel without bruising,
O low, under the brass orchard
Hunger bites into fruit and receives a city in the mouth,
we chew rented rooms, bridges, failed love,
derailed trains, and a sweetness going brown,
O low, under the brass orchard
The seeds ask for time while the mouth asks for sugar,
we carry both petitions and fail them with exemplary human balance,
O low, under the brass orchard
Felix opens his notebook and the orchard leans nearer,
we see diagrams of apples, cathedrals, cinema, money, revival, Bangor, why, why, why,
O low, under the brass orchard
The word WHY repeats eight hundred times with warehouse precision,
we understand questions as unpaid debts stacked by size, date, and spiritual hazard,
O low, under the brass orchard
He speaks of historical consciousness as if it were a borrowed hat,
we try it on and find our ancestors have left

rainwater in the brim,
O low, under the brass orchard
Progress, he says, is often a social habit wearing boots,
we look down and find our soles full of roads we never chose to walk,
O low, under the brass orchard
The clouds convene above Maine with minutes, motions, and mild thunder,
we wait for them to table the sun and adjourn into fog, as usual,
O low, under the brass orchard
The chiliast believes the kingdom arrives all at once,
we answer with lightning, trumpets, opened graves, and the dangerous mercy of suddenly,
O low, under the brass orchard
The liberal believes the kingdom arrives gradually,
we answer with committees, subcommittees, grants, refreshments, and chairs that squeal,
O low, under the brass orchard
Somewhere a typewriter explodes from mechanical conscience,
we see its keys scatter like black seeds from a pod

too long closed,
O low, under the brass orchard
A robin lands with a zoning ordinance folded in its beak,
we receive the bird's public comment as older than jurisdiction and twice as exact,
O low, under the brass orchard
Johnny smiles because planting is an argument against the convenience of despair,
we watch his hand enter stone-soil with no guarantee except the entering,
O low, under the brass orchard
Paul scratches his beard and the beard forms a constituency,
we hear mountains mutter through it about labor, oxen, payroll, and myth,
O low, under the brass orchard
Felix says the poet wanted apocalypse through culture,
we turn apocalypse gently and find performance, beauty, pamphlets, song, a crowded hall,
O low, under the brass orchard
Not barricades, says Felix, but voices, not rifles, but rhythm,
we almost believe him because old hopes sound

noble when filtered through leaves,
O low, under the brass orchard
Then modernity replies by inventing radio,
we stand still as if a wrench has dropped inside the machinery of the century,
O low, under the brass orchard
The prophecy comes true wearing the wrong vocabulary,
we recognize the future and do not forgive it for resembling an advertisement,
O low, under the brass orchard
He dreamed of many voices saving democracy by singing together,
we hear wires multiply the voices until the singer becomes weather, market, static,
O low, under the brass orchard
Cinema opens one mechanical eyelid over the apple and the rented room,
we splice hunger to doctrine, doctrine to fruit, fruit to a crowd entering rain,
O low, under the brass orchard
The shipyard groans beyond the orchard like a skeleton asked to resume work,
we see men hammering vessels that sank before

their fathers learned their names,
O low, under the brass orchard
Their hammers strike empty air and the air accepts wages,
we call the rhythm heartbeat because calling it evidence would be too cruel,
O low, under the brass orchard
The foreman checks a watch whose hands have resigned,
we continue the shift because stopped time still requires supervision,
O low, under the brass orchard
Mud and stagnant water hold the men without reflection,
we look down and see only gray sky practicing its signature on our faces,
O low, under the brass orchard
Night is not a curtain but a blanket lowered by warehouse pulleys,
we stand beneath it while streetlamps flicker like witnesses losing courage,
O low, under the brass orchard
The city enters its true profession of shadow and whisper,
we walk past cafés where the past sits heavier than

tables, cups, bones,
O low, under the brass orchard
Pharmacy technicians drink coffee that tastes of ash and parliamentary regret,
we listen as they discuss a revolution that failed by never applying for existence,
O low, under the brass orchard
The unsaid love sits among them with its hat still on,
we know it by the chair no body has occupied for thirty years,
O low, under the brass orchard
A train that never left is remembered by everyone who missed it,
we carry tickets punched by fog and validated by sorrow's little machine,
O low, under the brass orchard
Their words circle the room without center or exit,
we follow the labyrinth until language becomes a spoon stirring cold ash,
O low, under the brass orchard
Morning brings light, not mercy, not explanation,
we see dust on the furniture and dust's long legal

claim upon the living,
O low, under the brass orchard
Paint peels from the walls in pale tongues of exhausted testimony,
we touch each flake and hear houses confess what tenants could not,
O low, under the brass orchard
Weeds strain through cracks in the sidewalk like green defendants,
we know the city will sentence them to withering without reading the charge,
O low, under the brass orchard
The man rises because existence has inertia even when hope has none,
we rise with him as a choir of joints, invoices, stale bread, reluctant lungs,
O low, under the brass orchard
At the window he sees the orchard that is not there,
we see red apples hanging from invisible branches and believe them less safely,
O low, under the brass orchard
Their sweetness has already turned toward mold in a season without a calendar,
we reach and do not reach because desire is often

another form of trespass,
O low, under the brass orchard
No hand picks the fruit and no mouth redeems it,
we let the wind inherit what longing could only
inventory,
O low, under the brass orchard
The river continues with the cruelty of not being
cruel,
we watch it carry broken dreams as if debris had
requested transportation,
O low, under the brass orchard
It flows toward a sea that may not exist,
we keep walking because horizons are tricks
designed for the tired and obedient,
O low, under the brass orchard
The road stretches forward until it loops back to
the same rented room,
we call this narrative because circular pain keeps
excellent books,
O low, under the brass orchard
The chair waits with the patience of an
accomplice,
we sit and become the city again, the dream again,
the wound with windows,
O low, under the brass orchard

The catalog of possibilities remains unwritten in a book without pages,
we read it by tearing time's thin leather in our hands,
O low, under the brass orchard
The man is the city and the city is the dream and the dream is the trial,
we testify together though the judge is mildew and the court is fog,
O low, under the brass orchard
Every moment becomes an eternity folded into a moment,
we hold it like amber around a sorrow too deep to keep screaming,
O low, under the brass orchard
There is peace there, terrible and almost beautiful,
we hate it because it resembles surrender and love it because it stops demanding proof,
O low, under the brass orchard
To build a life on sand and smoke is foolish,
we do it anyway because foundations are often discovered after collapse,
O low, under the brass orchard

The tide comes in without thesis, badge, lantern, sermon, or permission,
we let it take hammer, watch, ticket, notebook, apple, bar glass, blue absence, name,
O low, under the brass orchard
Water washes the room until the ceiling loses its continent,
we watch failure dissolve and cannot decide if this is mercy or erasure,
O low, under the brass orchard
Nothing stays behind but the sound before sound, we drone it together because the world did not care and still we were here,
O low, under the brass orchard

Naturally the adults, upon being shown these rubbings by children vibrating with the particular frequency of discovery, assume the poem refers to hunting, because adults always assume that instructions concern the activity already occupying their thoughts, and in Greenville in June the activity occupying every thought is the Moose Lottery, which is not a lottery in the gambling sense but a lottery in the older, darker sense, the sense in which one's name is drawn from

a pool and one is thereby selected for an encounter with something enormous and inevitable and antlered and breathing, an encounter that will occur months later in a forest where the fog does not lift so much as rearrange itself into corridors through which the animal moves with an authority so absolute that the hunter, upon seeing it, frequently forgets to fire, not out of mercy but out of recognition, because what one recognizes in the moose is not an animal but a fact, and the fact is that the forest belongs to the moose and the hunter is a guest who has been issued a permit by a bureaucracy that the forest does not acknowledge.

But the children know better.
Children always know better.

Children understand that a poem hidden in a urinal panel in a men's lavatory at a county fairground is not about hunting.
It is a treasure map.
And treasure maps do not describe the world.

They describe the distance between the reader and the thing the reader does not yet know the reader is looking for.

The children spend the afternoon decoding.

They sit beneath the grandstand on concrete that smells of rain that has not yet arrived, which is a smell particular to northern Maine in June, a smell composed of lake water and pine resin and the iron content of soil that was deposited by a glacier whose name, if glaciers had names, would be longer than the history of every town it created, and they study the permit lists that have been posted on plywood boards along the midway, thousands of names, thousands of towns, rows of letters marching with governmental confidence across paper that no one was meant to read attentively, and yet attention is exactly what the children apply, because attention, the rarest and most dangerous of instruments, transforms everything it touches:

Inventory into archaeology.
Lottery results into cartography.

A restroom into literature.
They begin with the last name on the list.
They count backward.
Through the forest of letters.
Every seventh letter.
Every seventh letter of every seventh name.

The message assembles itself with the patience of a thing that has been waiting to be read for longer than the children have been alive, longer than their parents, longer than the grandstand whose shadow falls precisely where the poem said it would fall, touching concrete that touches cold air that touches sweetness, and the sweetness is real, the sweetness is not metaphor, the sweetness is the smell of chocolate arriving from beneath the grandstand through a gap in the skirting that a maintenance crew has failed to repair for so many consecutive years that the failure has assumed the character of policy.
A thunderstorm arrives over Moosehead Lake.

The rain begins with a single drop on a metal roof, then two, then a sound like applause from an audience composed entirely of the sky, and

somewhere beneath a canopy on the eastern edge of the midway a fiddler begins playing, not because the rain has summoned the music but because the music was already there and the rain has merely provided the accompaniment that music in this latitude requires, a drone of water on metal that functions as a bass note beneath whatever melody the fiddler chooses, and a woman whose name no one present can later recall begins singing an old song, a song in which someone leaves and someone waits and the leaving and the waiting are not opposites but the same motion observed from different positions, and the children ignore all of this because they have found the gap in the skirting and they are crawling through.
The inventory register, resting in the filing cabinet in the fairgrounds office three hundred yards away, acquires moisture.

This is worth noting.

Documents, contrary to the prevailing epistemological assumption that treats them as inert surfaces upon which information has been deposited like sediment, possess weather.

They swell.
They contract.
They smell of wet cardboard and iron.

They yellow at rates determined not by chemistry alone but by the intensity of the questions that have been asked of them, which is why certain pages in certain archives age faster than their neighbors, as though the attention directed at them by researchers constitutes a form of sunlight, and sunlight, as every archivist knows, is the enemy of paper, and attention, as every archivist suspects but will not say aloud, is the enemy of the thing attended to, because attention does not preserve, attention transforms, and what it transforms the document into is no longer a document but a relationship, and relationships, unlike documents, cannot be filed.
Beneath the grandstand the children find it.
Not gold.
Not permits.
Not trophies.
Refrigeration.

A refrigeration unit of uncertain provenance humming to itself in the bass register of a mechanical patience so profound it resembles devotion, plugged into an outlet that should not exist according to the electrical plan filed with the county but does exist according to the evidence of the senses and the evidence of the chocolate, because inside the refrigeration unit stands a chocolate moose, a moose sculpted from chocolate, a moose taller than three children standing on each other's shoulders, its hide composed of dark chocolate so dense it appears to contain its own gravity, its antlers fashioned from milk chocolate with the anatomical precision of a taxidermist who has abandoned the physical medium in favor of the confectionary, and its interior—this the children discover only later, after a boy named Marquis whose family has attended the fair for four generations applies a thumb to the moose's flank with experimental pressure—its interior contains not more chocolate but chocolate mousse, a substance whose name in English constitutes a pun so obvious that no one ever mentions it and whose relationship to the moose that contains it constitutes a joke so

elaborate that the universe itself must be considered the comedian, and there is enough of it, enough mousse inside the moose, to feed an entire classroom or a 4-H club or, if properly supervised, which in this context means supervised by someone who understands that the ratio of mousse to child is a moral question, several generations of cousins. No record explains who constructs it.

No line item in any budget submitted to the county commissioners references chocolate in any form. No committee claims responsibility.

And here one must pause, because the absence of a committee in Piscataquis County is an event of considerable ontological significance, given that the county operates through committees the way a river operates through tributaries, which is to say that every action, no matter how minor, is presumed to originate in a committee and to terminate in a report, and the absence of a committee means either that the chocolate moose does not exist, which the mousse on the children's fingers contradicts, or that it exists outside the system of committees entirely, which in

Piscataquis County is equivalent to existing outside the system of reality, and yet there it stands, every year, dark and cold and enormous and sweet, an annual impossibility whose recurrence has rendered it not more explicable but less, because a single miracle can be dismissed as error but a recurring miracle must be acknowledged as structure, and structure, unlike error, demands a response, and the response of the county has been silence, which is its own form of acknowledgment, the form preferred by institutions that have learned through long experience that the most efficient method of managing the inexplicable is to provide it with neither a name nor a budget and to wait for it to become traditional, because tradition, unlike explanation, requires no evidence.

Each year the moose appears.
This is not the impossible thing.
People are always willing to produce unexplained desserts.

The history of rural New England is substantially a history of food that arrives without attribution: casseroles deposited on porches, pies left on

counters, preserves that accumulate in cellars the way stalactites accumulate in caves, by processes too slow and too distributed to observe directly, and the chocolate moose is merely the largest and most sculptural instance of a phenomenon so common that it barely registers as unusual, and to focus on the moose is to commit the error of attending to the spectacular while the genuinely impossible occurs quietly in a filing cabinet three hundred yards away, in the drawer that opens with the sound of rust arguing with a hinge, in the folder that smells of wet cardboard and iron, on the page that contains Item 44 and its annotation.

The impossible thing is elsewhere.
The impossible thing resides in the register.

Every copy of the sanitary fixture register—the clerk's copy, the maintenance copy, the copy held by the woman in Monson—contains, on the final page of Folder 7, one additional note, and the wording of this note changes slightly between copies, and the handwriting changes dramatically, as though each version were inscribed by a different person operating under a different theory of

penmanship, and the ink color varies from blue to black to a brownish sepia that may be ink or may be something older than ink, and yet despite these variations, which in any other context would suggest forgery or contamination or the involvement of a committee, the meaning of the note remains identical across all three copies, identical in the way that a face reflected in three different mirrors remains the same face despite the differences in glass and light and angle:

The note predicts the name of the next person who will open the file.
Not metaphorically.
Not in the manner of a fortune cookie whose predictions achieve accuracy through vagueness.
Specifically.
With full name.
With date.
With, in two of the three copies, a brief description of the reader's clothing.
Archivists notice this.
Of course they notice.

Archivists are trained to notice everything and to record what they notice in a hand that betrays nothing of the noticing, which is to say that archivists are the closest thing the modern world possesses to monks, and like monks they have learned that certain phenomena are best acknowledged through the disciplined practice of silence, because discussion creates paperwork, and paperwork creates committees, and committees create explanations, and explanations, once produced, must be maintained, and maintenance requires budget, and budget requires justification, and justification requires evidence, and the evidence in this case is a note in a sanitary fixture register that knows who you are before you open it, which is not the kind of evidence that survives a budget hearing, not because it is untrue but because the truth it contains belongs to a category for which no line item has been established.

Therefore the archivists do not discuss it.
Therefore the note survives.
Discussion, one is forced to conclude, is the natural predator of the miraculous.
Silence is its habitat.

There arrives, in time—and "in time" here means after a duration that the register itself has presumably anticipated with its customary prescience—an editor, a man whose name the register already contains on a page he has not yet turned to, a man who has undertaken the compilation of a definitive history of the Moose Lottery, a project of such staggering and unnecessary comprehensiveness that his colleagues regard it with the mixture of pity and admiration reserved for people who have chosen to climb a mountain that no one has asked to be climbed, a man who has spent eleven months studying winner lists, maintenance records, vendor applications, permit maps, weather reports, copies of speeches delivered by game wardens at banquets where the centerpieces were constructed from antlers, transcripts of public hearings in which citizens debated the relative merits of archery season versus rifle season with a theological fervor suggesting that the question at stake was not the method of killing but the nature of the soul, and box after box after box of paper that smells of basements and patience and the particular variety of municipal ambition that expresses itself not through grand

projects but through the refusal to discard anything, ever, on the principle that disposal is a decision and decisions are the responsibility of committees and the committee has not met since 1987 and no one is certain it still exists, which means the paper stays, which means the boxes accumulate, which means the editor, arriving in the archive with the confident purposefulness of a man who believes he is the one doing the reading, finds himself instead submerged in a documentary ocean so vast and so detailed that the question is no longer what the archive contains but what it excludes, and the answer, he gradually realizes, is nothing, the archive excludes nothing, it has absorbed the entire county the way the lake absorbs the rivers, passively, comprehensively, without apparent effort, and what remains is not a collection of documents but a document that has dreamed itself into being a collection, which is not the same thing.

He discovers, on a Tuesday whose weather the register has already described in a footnote he will not find until Thursday, that the poem hidden in

the urinal panel follows a structural pattern almost identical to the archive itself.

Inventory.
Annotation.
Correction.
Song.
Silence.
Return.
Six movements.

The same six movements that organize the filing system, that organize the permit process, that organize the lottery itself, that organize, he begins to suspect with growing alarm, his own investigation, because a pattern that appears in a urinal panel and in a filing system and in a lottery and in the investigation of the lottery is not a pattern—a pattern is what one finds when one looks—it is a grammar, a grammar is what one speaks without knowing one is speaking, and a grammar that governs both the archive and the person reading the archive is not a grammar but a mirror, and a mirror does not show you what you look like, a mirror shows you what looking looks

like, which is a different thing, a thing that the register has apparently understood since before the surviving records.

The poem appears less written than engineered.
Less engineered than remembered.
Less remembered than waiting.
He works late.

He works past the hour when the fairgrounds empty and the loudspeakers cease and the only sounds are the wind in the pines along the shore of the lake and the occasional passage of a truck on the Lily Bay Road and the hum of the refrigeration unit beneath the grandstand that should not exist according to the electrical plan and does exist according to the evidence of the senses, and at first he believes he is annotating the documents, which is to say he believes the red ink in his pen is his, the marginal notes are his, the cross-references and corrections and queries are his, he believes he is the author of the apparatus that is accumulating around the text like moss around a stone, but then—

He notices references to events that have not yet occurred.

A correction dated three years in the future, written in his handwriting, in his red ink, referencing a page he has not yet reached.

A footnote describing his jacket—"brown corduroy, left elbow worn, interior pocket contains a receipt from the Irving station in Guilford dated the previous morning"—with an accuracy so absolute that he checks the pocket and finds the receipt and checks the date and finds it is correct and checks the elbow and finds it is worn and checks himself and finds he is afraid.
An appendix, attached to the final page of Box 9, mentioning a coffee stain on page 214 that he has not yet spilled.
He turns to page 214.
The page is clean.
He sets down his coffee.
He stares at the page.
He picks up the coffee.
He is careful.
He is extraordinarily careful.

He holds the cup with both hands.
He drinks.
He sets it down.
He turns to page 215.
He turns back to page 214.
The stain is there.
Brown.
Irregular.

Shaped, if one is inclined to see shapes in stains, and one is always inclined to see shapes in stains because the inclination to see shapes in shapelessness is not a flaw of perception but the fundamental operation of perception itself, shaped like an antler.
Or a cattail.
Or a diamond.
Or a letter in an alphabet that is still being invented.
The register grows increasingly confident.
The editor grows increasingly provisional.

This is the relationship that the poem described, the relationship between the archive and the person who enters it believing himself to be the one

conducting the study, a belief that the archive tolerates the way a lake tolerates a boat, allowing the boat to believe that it moves across the surface while the lake understands that the surface is a fiction maintained for the boat's convenience, that what actually occurs is that the lake permits passage and the lake withdraws permission and the boat calls these events "sailing" and "sinking" and the lake calls them nothing because the lake does not call, the lake is called upon, and the difference between calling and being called upon is the difference between the editor and the register, between the annotator and the annotated, between the one who reads and the one who has already been read.

Near midnight he opens Folder 7.
The folder smells of wet cardboard and iron and, faintly, impossibly, chocolate.
He turns past Item 44.
Past the paint strata.
Past the annotation about the children.
To the final page.
Which contains a new entry.

An entry that was not present when he first opened this folder eleven months ago, an entry that was not present when the clerk made his copy or the maintenance office made its copy or the woman in Monson acquired hers by means she refuses to explain, an entry that exists now with the calm authority of a fact that has always existed and has merely been waiting for the correct moment to be noticed, the way a moose in fog has always been standing exactly where it is standing and has merely been waiting for the fog to thin enough for the hunter to see it and for the hunter to realize that what he is seeing is not a moose emerging from fog but a moose that has been watching him since before he entered the forest.

Inventory Item 45.
One editor.
Condition: Serviceable.
Observed making annotations.
Observed believing annotations originate with himself.
Observed drinking coffee in proximity to page 214.
No action required.
He reads the entry three times.

He reads it the way one reads a mirror.
Not for information.
For confirmation.

At that moment the archive ceases behaving like an object and resumes behaving like what it has always been, which is not a collection of documents about a county fair but a document about the person reading it, a document that has been waiting in a filing cabinet in a putty-colored drawer in a room that smells of wet cardboard and iron for someone to arrive and open it and begin annotating it and believe the annotations were his and gradually discover that the annotations were already there, that they had always been there, that the red ink was always already on the page and the hand holding the pen was always already described in the margin and the margin was always already wider than the text it annotated because the margin is where the reader lives and the reader is always wider than the reading and the reading has always known this and has been patiently, serviceably, implacably recording it.

The register was never being studied.

The register was conducting the study.
The poem was never hidden in the iron.
The iron was hidden inside the poem.

The children were never making rubbings of the panel.
The panel was making rubbings of the children.
The inventory had always known who would read it.

The moose—the real one, the one that stands in fog on logging roads at four in the morning with the patience of a creature that has never doubted its own existence—had always known who would draw its name.

The editor discovers, with the peculiar calm reserved for people who arrive very late to obvious truths, a calm that is not peace but exhaustion, not acceptance but the recognition that resistance has been, from the beginning, an activity the register anticipated and annotated and filed under "expected responses, subcategory: denial, cross-reference: page 1," he discovers that he is the final entry.

He does not close the folder.
This is important.
He does not close the folder because the folder is already closed, has always been closed, the opening was the illusion and the closure is the condition, the reading was a dream the archive was having about itself, a dream in which a man arrived and believed he was awake and opened drawers and turned pages and spilled coffee and wore a brown corduroy jacket with a worn left elbow and thought he was writing a history of the Moose Lottery when he was in fact being written by the Moose Lottery, being inventoried by the inventory, being registered by the register, and now the dream is over and the archive folds him gently back between its pages the way one presses a leaf between the pages of a book, not to preserve the leaf but to give the book something to remember.

He closes the folder.
The folder closes him.

Somewhere beyond the fairgrounds, beyond the lake that is larger than memory but smaller than

rumor, beyond the last road where moose emerge from fog with the authority of unfinished thoughts, a road that appears on no map because maps are made by people and this road was made by the passage of animals whose patience with human cartography has always been limited, somewhere in a June that has not yet arrived but is already, in the register, annotated and cross-referenced and assigned a weather report that mentions rain on metal roofs and a fiddler and a song no one entirely remembers, children are pressing paper against cast iron.

They are beginning the rubbing.
The crayon moves sideways.
The pattern emerges.
Diamonds.
Cattails.
Antlers.
Letters.
A poem.

The poem will eventually produce the page the editor has just read.
Or the page has already produced the poem.

Or the distinction between producing and being produced is another of those fictions the archive tolerates, like the distinction between the reader and the read, like the distinction between the moose and the fog, like the distinction between the surface of the lake and the depth of the lake, which is no distinction at all because the surface is merely the depth's way of being seen and the depth is merely the surface's way of being meant.

The register waits.
It has always waited.
It will continue to wait.

This is not patience.
Patience implies the possibility of impatience.
This is something older.
This is the iron cooling around a design that preceded the iron.
This is the poem writing the panel that hides the poem.

This is the archive filing itself under its own name in a cabinet it constructed for the purpose of being

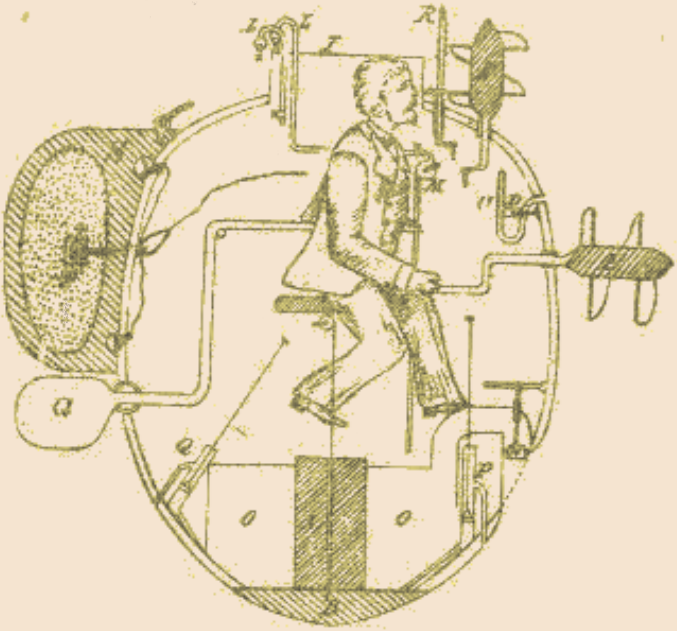
discovered by a person it invented for the purpose of being filed.

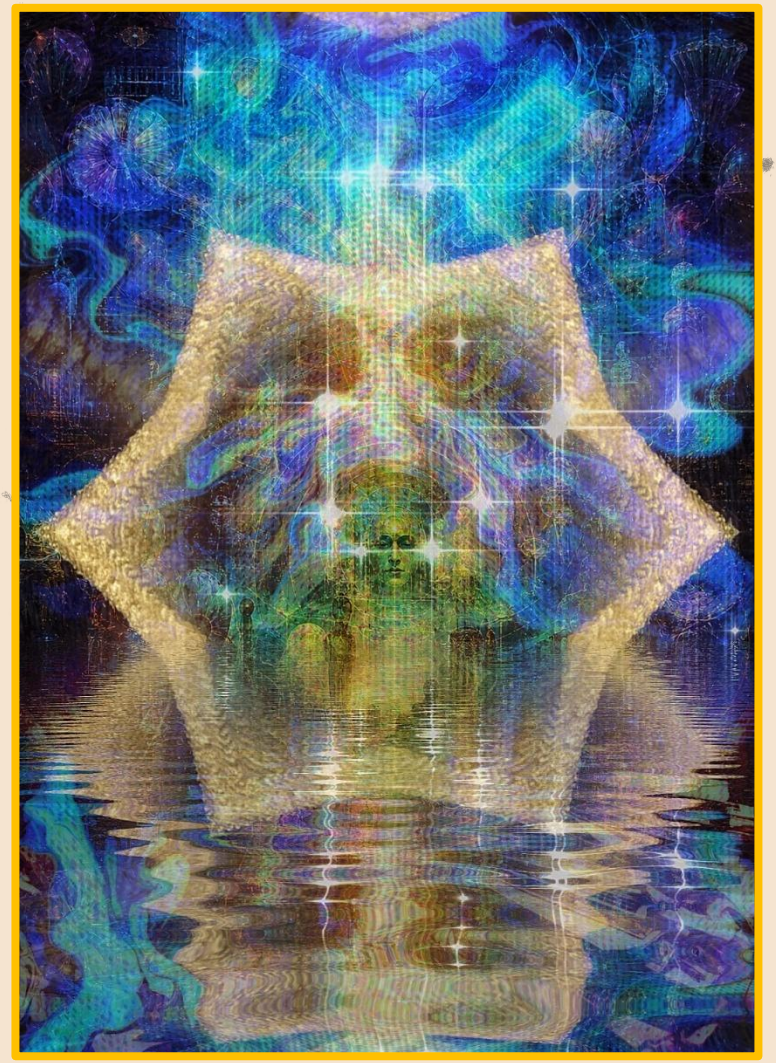
Condition: Serviceable.
Condition: Serviceable.
Condition: Serviceable.

The word survives every civilization that speaks it. The word survives because it describes not a state but a willingness, the willingness of the thing to remain available to the next hand that touches it, the next crayon that drags across it, the next eye that reads it, the next editor who believes he is the one doing the reading, and this willingness, this posture of inexhaustible availability, is what the children recognize when they press their paper against the iron, it is what the iron recognizes when it presses its pattern against the paper, it is what the register recognizes when it presses its knowledge against the reader, and the recognition is mutual and the recognition is recursive and the recognition is the only event that has ever occurred in the archive, the only entry that has ever been recorded, repeated across ten thousand pages in ten thousand variations with ten thousand different

names and dates and jacket descriptions, the same entry, always the same entry:

One reader.
Condition: Serviceable.
No action required.





The Industry of Pyramus

By Kenneth Stahl

The industry of suffocating pain calls
itself Pyramus,
as if naming could soften
what it builds in the throat of the world.

Every mind that downloads the civic
dream
edits it differently—
a municipal hallucination rendered in
private syntax,
each vision a correction
that only deepens the error.

Kon Chu stands at the threshold,
not smiling, exactly,
but wearing the face that comes after
deciding not to warn you.

Valicius dissolves again and again,
not dying so much as reformatting—
a file that rejects permanence,
a body rendered in unstable revisions,
each draft more confident, each draft less
true.

The keyboard of genesis has three strata:
press,
echo,
fracture—

and beneath them,
the silent substrate
where meaning forgets
the architecture that carried it.

Somewhere, a priesthood chants in
corrupted tags,
downloading the remnants of a language
that no longer agrees with itself.

White artifacts live together in pain,
their surfaces bright with preservation,
their interiors worn by use—

a syntax of shared erosion,
the way tenants share a condemned
building.

And at the door—
always at the door—

pain arrives as weather mistaken for
doctrine,
light interpreted as verdict,
a storm translated into obligation.

The intestines of history coil tighter,
not from suffering but from use,
as though endurance itself
were a kind of forgiveness.

Petronius writes nothing new.
Neuroscience merely confirms
the ancient dizziness.

We remain a society leaning inward,
each reflection insisting it is the original,
each original already a reflection.

Rob Bodis appears in the archive,
then in the margin,
then in the footnote that refuses to end—
a curator of collapsing diagrams
whose presence becomes
a commentary on presence itself.

The DAISY files open
like wounds that learned to speak.

Montreal.
1622.
2026.

Time stacked like misfiled evidence,
every date a corridor
leading to the same locked room.

The pedestrian becomes a hypothesis.
The scientist forgets what the instrument
was built to measure.
Routes reroute themselves through
rumor,
and grief multiplies in registers
where each digit is a small confession

no one asked to hear.

And still the bodice remains—

an ordinary emblem mistaken for
principle,
stitched from theories of beauty and
constraint,
worn by those who believe
structure is safety.

But structure leaks.

The archive leaks.
The body leaks.
The state leaks.

Every container inherits
the shape of its failure.

The void is not solved.

It is distributed evenly
across every explanation.

The archive grows,
but the thing archived
keeps slipping out through the margins.

In the end, there is only motion:

downloads without origin,
archives without archive,
memories citing sources
that no longer exist.

Pain rendered as interface.
Meaning rendered as process.

And the persistent,
ungoverned fact

that meaning keeps trying
to assemble itself

from what refuses
to stay assembled.

CITATIONS

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THE PANOPTICON INSTITUTE FOR RECURSIVE INQUIRY

(FOWL FEATHERED REVIEW / BACKPAGE BROADSIDE EDITION / VOL. IX: THE BUREAU OF ERRANT KNOWLEDGE)

BEHOLD THE CURIOUS CALLING OF ERRANT SCHOLARS, DREAMERS, AND UNREGISTERED THINKERS! A MARVEL OF MODERN ARCANA DISGUISED AS AN INSTITUTE OF LEARNING!

HEY—YOU—YES YOU WITH THE THINKING FACE AND THE QUESTIONABLE FUTURE—

step forth, step sideways, step entirely out of sequence—

the PANOPTICON INSTITUTE FOR RECURSIVE INQUIRY is now enrolling, unenrolling, re-enrolling, and generally confounding the very ledgers of destiny itself in a low-ceiling civic zone between a defunct department store, a reflexology parlor of uncertain

doctrine, and a vending machine that occasionally produces annotations instead of snacks.

📯 HEAR THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN TRIPLICATE, WRITTEN IN SNOW AND STATIC:

"We got knowledge so deep it requires a snorkel, a ladder, and a provisional understanding of your own biography!"

"HERE COMES THE JUDGE—AND HE HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER YOU ARE A QUESTION OR A DOCUMENT!"

"THE SYLLABUS WAS LAST SEEN NEGOTIATING ITS OWN LEGIBILITY IN A CORRIDOR OF UNSTABLE LIGHTING!"

⚠ STEP FORTH, SEEKER OF PECULIAR WISDOM! ⚠

FOR HERE ARE OFFERED:

diplomas that precede their instruction

lectures delivered in fractured continental weather patterns

metaphysics served in chipped institutional porcelain

accreditation so irregular it circles back into legitimacy by misadventure

📣 CALL NOW—OR DO NOT—THE TELEPHONE IS ALREADY RECORDING YOUR INTENTIONS IN DUPLICATE.

A MOST EXTRAORDINARY AND SOMEWHAT FORBIDDEN TREATISE UPON WANDERING SIGNIFIERS, BEING ALSO A FLUXUS INSTRUCTION SET, CRACKPOT ALCHEMICAL TABLET, AND EDUCATIONAL RELIC OF THE LOWER HALLS

☩ ARTICLE I — OF DRUNKEN SIGNIFICATION AND THE STAGGERING LETTER
WHEREIN IT IS PROVED THAT MEANING MOVES LIKE A DISBANDED REGIMENT THROUGH RAIN

The signifier no longer points.
It stumbles.
It reels through language like a tired herald who has forgotten which kingdom he serves.
Meaning is not delivered.
It is spilled.

☩ ARTICLE II — OF THE LOW INSTITUTES OF BROKEN HALLS AND IMPROVISED LEARNING
WHEREIN EDUCATION OCCURS WITHOUT PERMISSION OR STABILITY

Education is not transmitted.
It is:
shouted through cracked brass speaking horns
written on the reverse of expired municipal forms
whispered by instructors who may themselves be misunderstandings
The classroom is wherever attention refuses to remain seated.

☩ ARTICLE III – OF CRACKPOT ALCHEMY MOST HIGH AND QUESTIONABLE DECLARATION OF TRANSMUTATION BY ERROR AND PERSISTENT MISREADING

All substances are symbolic until they misbehave.
All symbols are material until they collapse under their own enthusiasm.
Gold is what happens when:
failure persists long enough to be mistaken for method
method forgets its function and becomes decorative
decoration begins issuing instructions

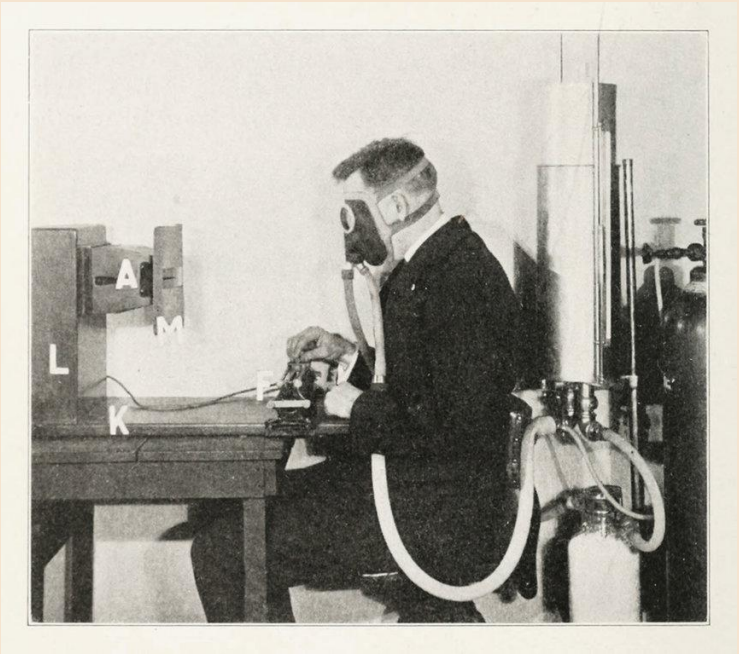
☩ ARTICLE IV – OF FLUXUS INSTRUCTION MOST RADICAL AND UNAUTHORIZED COMMAND FOR PERFORMATIVE DISASSEMBLY OF TEXT AND OBJECT

Take heed:
cut the text into fragments
rearrange without consultation
affix fragments to a radiator or other warm bureaucratic surface

allow weather to annotate the result
declare it an examination artifact

☩ ARTICLE V — OF THE MIRROR THAT REFUSES TO STAY STILL
NOTE ON THE SUBJECT AS MISFILED ECHO IN ADMINISTRATIVE SPACE

The subject is:
a clerical error that learned to speak in complete sentences.
Desire is:
paperwork missing its explanation
corridors reflecting themselves incorrectly
diplomas that already exist but await recognition



NOSCE TE IPSUM, MISREAD IT WELL.

ERRARE HUMANUM, PERSISTERE MAGISTERIUM.

THE

PANOPTICON INSTITUTE FOR RECURSIVE INQUIRY

BUREAU OF ERRANT KNOWLEDGE & IMPROBABLE CERTIFICATION

PERAMBULA, ERRA, RIDE, RUMINA.

SAPIENTIA NON CAPTUR. SED COLLIGITUR.

DISCIPULUS ERRATICUS, MAGISTER NULLIUS.

LINGUA EST LABYRINTHUS.

TESTIMONIUM MIRABILIS ET ERRATICUM

BE IT KNOWN THROUGHOUT ALL QUIET CORRIDORS,
UNSTABLE HALLS, AND UNREGISTERED STUDY ZONES:

THAT THE BEARER HEREIN NAMED

YOUR NAME HERE

HATH PASSED THROUGH THE THREE-FOLD STRANGE EXAMINATION:

THE ADVERTISEMENT MOST DELIRIOUS | THE MANIFESTO MOST FRACTURED | THE OBJECT MOST IMPROBABLE

FIELD OF STRANGE STUDIES

- ☐ Minor Arcana Bureaucratic Distortion
- ☐ Linguistic Drift and Skaldic Compression Arts
- ☐ Applied Vaudeville Ontology
- ☐ Fluxus Instructional Disassembly Practice
- ☐ Crackpot Alchemical Reasoning (Unregulated but Functional)
- ☐ Diner Semiotics & Jukebox Cosmology

METHOD OF CERTIFICATION

INSTITUTUM ERRATICUM

By means of:

- sustained misreading of unstable instruction fields
- extraction of coherence from contradictory text masses
- recognition of hidden instruction beneath apparent nonsense
- endurance of semantic turbulence without withdrawal
- acceptance of humor at structurally inappropriate moments

LITTERA FUGIT SENSUS MANET

DECLARATION OF AUTHORITY

This diploma is hereby proclaimed:

- ☐ not accredited in any jurisdiction
- ☐ not unaccredited in any stable sense but misreading

It is valid only in:

- marginalia of uncertain provenance
- basements where fluorescent lighting hesitates
- kiosks of doubtful municipal standing
- and any place where language begins behaving like weather

FINAL CLAUSE OF RECOGNITION

THOU HAST NOT RECEIVED THIS DIPLOMA.
THOU HAST ONLY NOTICED THAT IT WAS ALREADY
BEING CUT OUT OF THE PAGE BEFORE THOU BEGANST TO READ.

TEMPORIS EDAX DIPLOMA MANET

NON SCHOLAE SED VITAE DISCIMUS

ARCHIVIST OF ACCIDENTAL RECORDS

REGISTRAR OF UNSTABLE MEANING

CUT HERE • FRAME HERE • MISREAD FOREVER